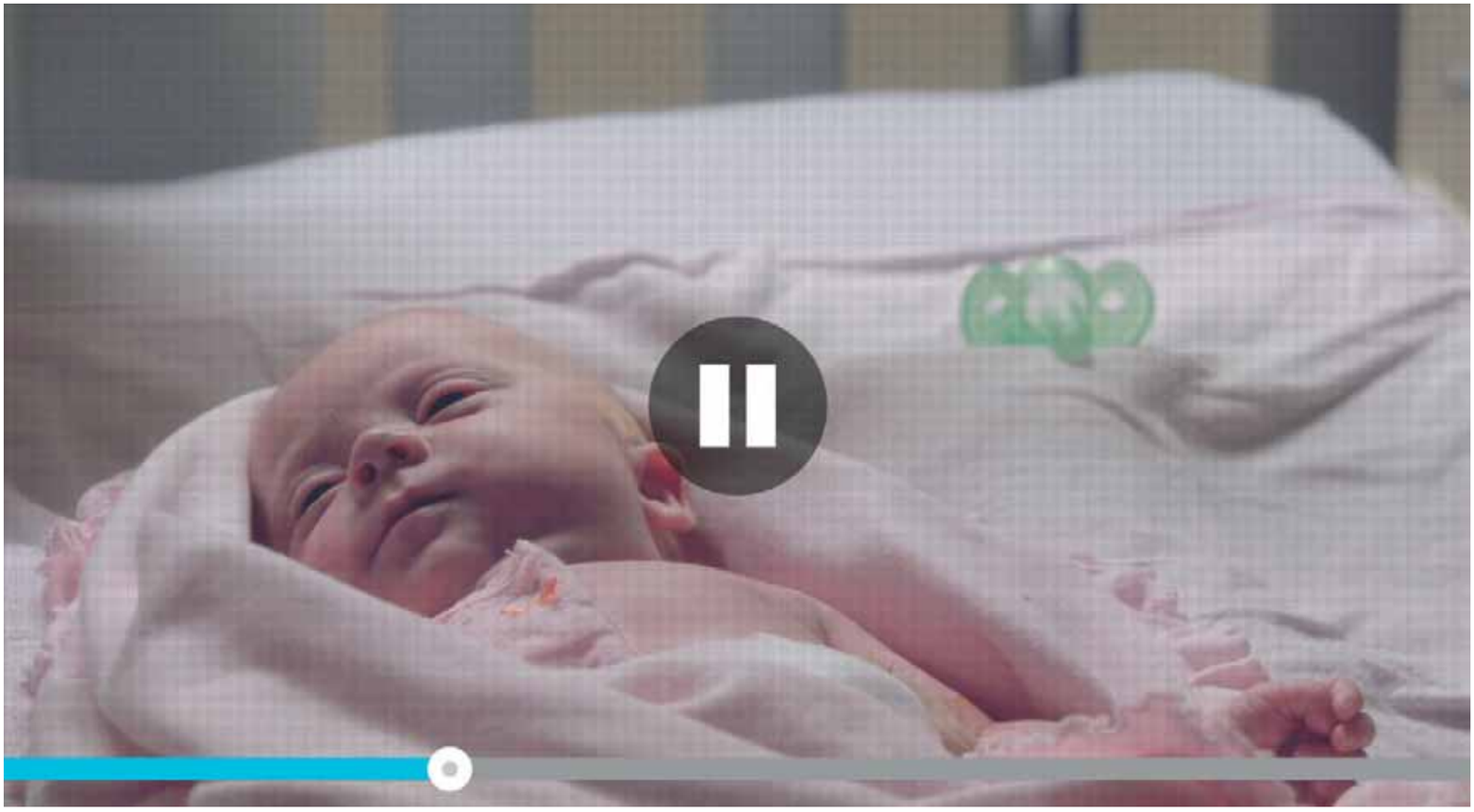
Toronto metro

WEEKEND, DECEMBER 18-20, 2015



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Toronto metro

Your essential daily news | WEEKEND, DECEMBER 18-20, 2015 | High 3°C/Low -2°C Partly cloudy

U of T fails on policy

SAFETY

No measures taken to fight sexual violence

Jessica Smith Cross
Metro | Toronto

The University of Toronto still doesn't have a policy for dealing with sexual violence on campus, a year after appointing a task force to address sexual assaults.

It's now the only university in the city without one. Ryerson and York both moved ahead with policies this year.

Althea Blackburn-Evans, a spokeswoman for U of T, said a report to the school's president and provost is expected in January. It will include, among other things, recommendations on creating a "framework" to ensure assaults are addressed appropriately when they happen.

Currently, sexual assault is mentioned only as an offence in the school's student code of conduct.

Sexual assaults on university campuses became a priority for school administrators and government legislators in 2014 due to high-profile incidents, including the Dalhousie dentistry controversy and allegations involving the University of Ottawa men's hockey team.

The University of Toronto came under fire after a sexual assault victim told the CBC the school failed to help her avoid attending classes with her attacker.

METRAC, a Toronto charity dedicated to ending violence against women and youth, has studied the issue of campus sexual assault and how good sexual assault policies can help students.

All schools need to take action, program coordinator Andrea Gunraj said.

"It's really important for universities and colleges to view this issue as a systemic issue, not just a behavioural issue between two people," she said. "They have to make the system better, safer and more responsive."

More coverage, page 10

D.I.Y. WHITE CHRISTMAS

FACE IT:

It's going to be green. It's going to be warm. Metro explains how to turn the big day into a winter wonderland.

metroNEWS

MEET THE MAN INSIDE THE DROID

(AND YES, C-3PO'S ARM IS RED)

metroLIFE

TWO YOUNG WOMEN: A VICTIM AND HER ALLEGED KILLER

Toronto's second random stabbing in a week. metroNEWS

Get to know Lolo

Lolo lives in colour

Lolo's dog has 5,000 followers

Lolo wears what works

Lolo doesn't skip breakfast

Lolo goes where she wants

Lolo is her own DJ

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Talk to your doctor

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metro NEWS
Your essential daily news

'Most hated man in America' arrested for fraud. **Business**

Probe finds Motherisk 'flawed' and 'unreliable'

DRUG TESTING

Review shows lab staff didn't have proper training

The drug and alcohol hair-testing process at the Hospital for Sick Children's Motherisk laboratory was "inadequate and unreliable," concludes a damning report from an independent review released Thursday, which calls for a second probe of criminal and child protection proceedings that had relied on the test results over the past decade.

"In the circumstances, I have concluded that the laboratory's flawed hair-testing evidence had serious implications for the fairness of child protection and criminal cases," said independent reviewer Susan Lang, a retired Court of Appeal judge. "A further review is warranted."

Lang had been tasked by the provincial government with reviewing hair testing done between 2005 and 2015 at the now-shuttered hair testing lab. She found the lab did not meet internationally recognized forensic standards, and that Sick Kids had not provided "meaningful oversight."

Minister of Children and Youth Services Tracy MacCharles stopped short of offering an apology — unlike Sick Kids CEO Dr. Michael Apkon last October — but did say she was "troubled" by the findings. She said the province will begin to establish a second review and appoint a commissioner.

"Our government is deeply concerned with the findings of this review and will be taking immediate action," she told reporters at Queen's Park.

MacCharles said a 1-800 number has been set up to encourage people whose cases may have involved Motherisk to request a review, as well as receive counseling.

The independent review was sparked by a Star investigation into Motherisk's hair testing practices.

The investigation showed that prior to 2010, Motherisk was testing hair using a methodology described by experts as falling short of the "gold-standard test."

Lang said that while Motherisk's hair tests were "forensic in nature," and the service it offered police and child protection agencies was a forensic one, none of the lab's leaders had formal training or experience in forensic toxicology.

"Perhaps this lack of training and experience is why neither (Motherisk) nor the Hospital for Sick Children appears to have appreciated that the laboratory was engaged in forensic work and that it was required to meet forensic standards," she wrote in her 344-page report.

"The result was inevitable: (Motherisk)'s testing and operations fell woefully short of internationally recognized forensic standards."

Lang concluded that Motherisk "inadequately communicated" its test results to customers, partly due to the lack of forensic training.

The independent review follows an internal Sick Kids probe that also found the Motherisk laboratory was operating at times without appropriate oversight.

While critics generally applauded the independent review's findings on Thursday, it was a case of "too little, too late" for Christine Rupert, whose two daughters were removed at birth and later adopted out. They remained in foster care based, at least partly, on Motherisk hair tests that showed Rupert was a heavy cocaine user — a finding she has always fiercely denied and has gone to great lengths to disprove.

"The damage is done; it's changed my life, it's changed the lives of my daughters," she told the Star, adding she intends to fully participate in the second review.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Christine Rupert's children were removed from her care at birth after Motherisk tests showed she had been using cocaine. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

"

The result was inevitable: Motherisk's testing and operations fell woefully short of internationally recognized forensic standards.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Justice Susan Lang

"

We regret that families feel that they may have been harmed through this whole set of events, but we applaud the approach of looking at things on a case-by-case basis in a second review.

SCREENSHOT

Dr. Michael Apkon

"

For today, we, as a province, must first turn to those children and those who were in care ... and say to them, 'We are with you'.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

Irwin Elman, child advocate

TOMORROW

CLIMATE CHANGE: SO NOW WHAT?

The Paris Climate Accord means it's time to clean up. Discover what you can do to make it happen; and what the city and the country have to do in order to make it stick. Tomorrow in Toronto Star Touch – the free news app from Toronto Star.

TORONTO STAR TOUCH

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ANDROID APP ON Google play

Shortfall solutions

Facing an operating budget with a $57-million shortfall and no way to pay for some $22 billion in infrastructure projects, politicians in Toronto seem to have accepted the city has a revenue problem. Filling holes in the city's coffers will undoubtedly require a property tax increase. Various councillors, meanwhile, are floating a number of ideas on how to bring in more revenue over and above that. Starting today, Metro will be looking at their proposals.

MINDING TORONTO'S BUDGET GAP

A municipal sales tax?

Luke Simcoe
Metro | Toronto

Ward 33 Coun. Shelley Carroll is proposing a municipal sales tax. She says adding one per cent to the HST on all local purchases could bring in $500 million in revenue annually.

Under the City of Toronto Act, the municipal government isn't allowed to levy a sales tax, but Carroll is confident the provincial government would acquiesce if the city was "brave enough" to ask for it.

"All of the other revenue tools in the City of Toronto Act, they could earn about $12 million here or $3 million there. But with a sales tax, we're talking about half a billion dollars every year. It would radically impact the future of transportation and everything else in this city," she said.

Carroll believes property tax hikes unfairly impact older Torontonians living on fixed incomes. They may have benefitted from rising real estate values, but unless they sell their homes, they don't have access to those funds.

A sales tax, in contrast, impacts those with more disposable income, she said.

"Look, if you can afford a $20,000 dress at a fancy shop on Bloor Street, I want a lot more of your money," she said. "You're doing well and you're in a better position to invest in the city, so when you're paying your sales tax a penny should go to the city to build the Gardiner, to build bridges, to expand transit and deal with poverty."

Carroll said that if the city is granted permission to levy a sales tax, it could take between one and two years to implement.

Ward 33 Coun. Shelley Carroll wants the province to **grant the city power to levy a municipal sales tax.** TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Have an idea of your own? Email luke.simcoe@metronews.ca

IN BRIEF

Police seek information on bicycle-on-car crash

Witnesses are sought in a Wednesday crash that sent a cyclist to hospital with life-threatening injuries. The cyclist, identified as a 68-year-old man, was crossing Leslie Street at Bannatyne Drive when he was hit by a southbound car. Anyone with information is asked to call police at 416-808-1900 or CrimeStoppers at 416-222-8477. METRO

Elderly man hit by car dies

Police say a man has died after being struck by a car in Cobourg, east of Toronto. They say 87-year-old Robert Davidson was hit just after 6 p.m. Wednesday and taken to hospital. He was transferred to Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto and died overnight. The investigation is ongoing. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Tractor-trailer driver dies after rock face collision

A man is dead after police say a tractor-trailer plowed into a rock face in the Georgian Bay area.

Police say the truck was travelling south on Highway 400 in Georgian Bay Township around 7:45 p.m. Wednesday when it veered off the road and onto the centre median, where it hit the rock. The driver, Gurpreet Singh Gill, 41, of Brampton, Ont., was pronounced dead at the scene.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Transition health fund for steel workers on track

The Ontario government says a transition fund to cover health costs for retired employees of US Steel Canada should be up and running by Jan. 1.

The $3-million fund was announced in October as U.S. Steel separated from its Canadian operations.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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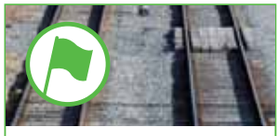
A LOOK BACK WHILE WE MOVE FORWARD

At Metrolinx, finding ways to help you spend more time living and less time commuting is at the heart of what we do every day.

Here are just a few highlights from 2015.

More GO kicked off 2015

Expansion plans for the Richmond Hill line gathered steam with the start of construction for the new Gormley GO Station.

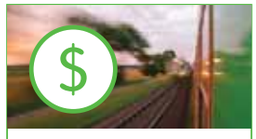


Stouffville Corridor Doubles up

Between Agincourt and Milliken GO stations, we're adding more tracks for more service in the communities in Stouffville, Markham and Scarborough.

Go places with Triplinx

Triplinx launched as the official online trip planner for the GTHA. Launched in partnership with all 11 regional transit services, Triplinx helps you find the best route from A to B or C, D and E!



Ready. Set. GO.

A $13.5 billion plan to transform existing GO commuter rail system was announced. This plan will provide electrified service with 15-minute frequencies in core areas—in both directions, on weekdays, evenings and on weekends.

York Concourse is a GO

Metrolinx and the City of Toronto proudly opened the newly renovated York Concourse, in historic Union Station with 62,000-square-feet of space, and a glistening glass atrium which was completed this summer.

Hurontario LRT 20 KM and 22 stops

Thanks to $1.4 billion in funding, the Hurontario LRT will connect Mississauga up to Brampton and move more people faster than ever before.

Hamilton LRT Moves Forward

$1 billion in funding was announced for the new Hamilton LRT which will link McMaster University, West Harbour GO and Queenston Circle. No excuses for those students to miss class!

Hello World.

This summer marked the largest international sporting event in Canada's history. GO Transit offered special service to the 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games and our own Metrolinx ambassadors welcomed thousands of visitors.

Smart Connects

Commuters connected with the Smart Commute program to explore new travel options, such as the benefits of taking transit, carpooling, cycling or teleworking.

UP Express Opens UP

On June 6, Union Pearson Express (UP Express) opened for service, providing a fast and reliable trip -25 minutes every 15 minutes between Union Station and Toronto Pearson. 25 minutes to the airport! You have to try it.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN J

METROLINX

An agency of the Government of Ontario

In 2015, we completed major projects that brought you more service and an easier commute, celebrated several milestones in communities across the region, announced new funding for future growth, and welcomed the world to the Pan Am/Parapan Am games.

We recognize there's so much more to do. With the support of the Province of Ontario, our municipal partners, and a network of passionate people, we'll continue planning, building and delivering transportation solutions as diverse as the communities we serve.

Openings **Funding** **Service Expansion** **Milestones** **Starts**

Bigger Bikeshare

There'll be a lot more wheels to go around after the announcement of a $4.9 billion partnership with the Toronto Parking Authority. This will double the size of the current Toronto network.

Welcoming West Harbour GO

The new West Harbour GO Station opened in Hamilton on James Street North in time to provide train service for key Pan Am events. Now it connects rides to the rest of the region.

Even More GO

If the added service on the Lakeshore East, West and Milton lines wasn't enough, GO introduced new midday weekday train trips between Brampton and Toronto and increased bus service to Pearson Airport.

Crosstown Goes West

The Eglinton Crosstown LRT tunnel boring machines 'Don' and 'Humber' began their journey westward towards Yonge Street. The Crosstown will link Kennedy to Mount Pleasant with 25 stops, connections to buses, subways and GO, and carry up to 5,400 passengers per hour.

vivaNext Highway 7 East Transformation

This new 6 km Rapidway connecting Bayview to Warden not only looks great, but makes travel across York Region easier, faster and more reliable.

A New Home for GO Trains

The construction of a new maintenance facility in Durham region has started. The facility will service and store up to 22 GO trains, which means more reliable service for you.

vivaNext Rapidway on Davis Drive

There's a new vitality on Davis Drive with service from Yonge to the 404, creating a connected, vibrant downtown for Newmarket.

More PRESTO on TTC

You can already use PRESTO, our fare payment card, across 11 transit systems, including 26 TTC subway stations. By year-end PRESTO will also be welcomed on all streetcars for seamless travel and an easier commute.

UL **AUG** **SEP** **OCT** **NOV** **DEC**

We're not done yet. Explore our plan to move the region forward at **metrolinx.com/moving forward**

Norm's bling likely to light up hotlines

FESTIVE FUN

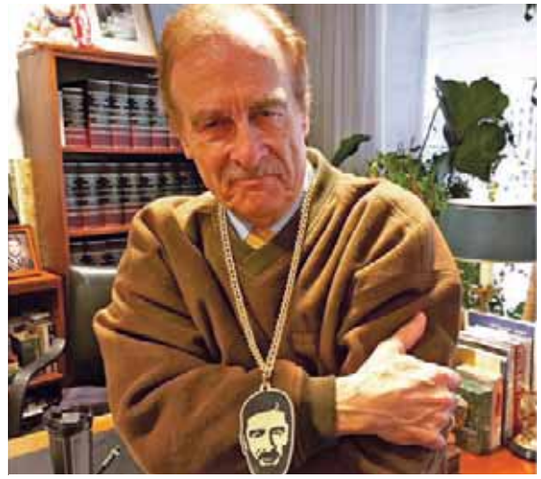
Kelly's chains are a must-have stocking filler

Luke Simcoe
Metro | Toronto

Toronto Coun. Norm Kelly earned some serious street cred this year — and now he's got the bling to prove it.

Common Dairy, a Toronto-based branding company, is selling gold chains boasting a wooden medallion of Kelly's face. Dubbed "6Dad Bling," the chains are on sale just in time for the @Norm fan on your Christmas list.

"We asked ourselves 'what is the most ridiculous and awesome thing that you can gift your friends and family this holiday?' The answer is Norm Kelly rapper chains, naturally," said Andrew Yeung, one of Common Dairy's co-founders.



Coun. Norm Kelly poses with a **Common Dairy "6Dad" chain. Versions with the councillor's face are also available.** TWITTER

The limited edition chains are being sold at tilt.com for $25. In addition to the average-sized medallions, Yeung says they've made an "extra-large Champagne Daddy version for those with a special level of self-confidence."

A portion of every sale is being donated to Covenant House in Toronto.

"Our city isn't without its challenges, and we have some major ones up ahead, and this is our way to help contribute to the solutions," Yeung said.

The chains are just the latest in a series of Norm Kelly merchandise. The unlikely Twitter celebrity has also had his face on everything from T-shirts to cellphone cases.

"Norm embodies what is uniquely great about this city. He's not afraid to step out of his comfort zone, or what people think of him either. He has an uncanny ability to be able to bring together people, regardless of age, race or background. His relationship with Drake; case in point," Yeung said.

For more information, follow @teamnormkelly

The scene at Blue Mountain on Thursday. WEBCAM

WEATHER

All green, no white leaving skiers Blue

Skiers and snowboarders may have to leave their equipment at home over the holidays, as the unseasonably warm temperatures so far this winter have left slopes without any snow.

Ontario's Blue Mountain Resort even plans to re-open its warmer-weather activities while it waits for the fluffy white stuff to fall, or for the mercury to dip low enough to make their own.

6°C

The mercury will be well away from freezing on Christmas Day if forecasts are accurate, with it due to be cloudy and 6 C.

"We do know that we are expecting a lot of guests to come over the holiday season, but Mother Nature doesn't seem ready to give us some snow," said resort spokesperson Tara Lovell.

In the Quebec City region, Mont-Sainte-Anne had three trails open on Thursday. Stoneham was operating three lifts and had five trails open, while Le Massif will only open on Saturday. Mont Tremblant in the Laurentians had 12 trails open Thursday, while nearby Mont-Saint-Sauveur was closed.

Blue Mountain's webcams laid bare the problem Thursday morning, with not so much as a patch of natural or manufactured snow visible anywhere.

The resort will re-open its ropes course, mini putt course, zip lines and climbing wall this Saturday at 10 a.m. and the activities will be available every day throughout the holiday period.

Lovell said this is the first time the resort, near Collingwood, Ont., has re-opened its green season activities at this time of year. She said if the area gets two consecutive nights that are cold enough, the resort will be able to make snow and open its downhill runs.

"Being off the Georgian Bay and on the Niagara escarpment, there's almost like a micro-climate here that's pretty volatile, so we're used to quick changes in the winter season," Lovell said. "Our snow-making team is on, watching the weather, 24 hours a day now." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

IN BRIEF

Oakville takes aim at Uber

Oakville City Council will consider licensing by-laws next year aimed at regulating companies like Uber. The move comes after consultation that included feedback from Uber and the taxi industry.

JULIA LE/METROLAND MEDIA

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Listening to the survivors

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Ryerson hires social worker to help victims

Jessica Smith Cross
Metro | Toronto

When Ryerson University adopted its sexual assault policy this year, it hired a social worker, too.

It's one example of how things have been changing on campuses for sexual assault survivors.

As schools adopt policies aimed at addressing sexual assaults, Farrah Khan, who runs Ryerson's Office of Sexual Violence Support and Education, said it's important to build support systems as well.

"You can have the prettiest policy, but what do we actually do with it?" she asked, explaining the stance.

Ryerson and York universities have adopted sexual assault policies since the issue was thrown into the campus spotlight for much of 2014. The University of Toronto still doesn't have a policy.

Farrah Khan is in charge of Ryerson University's new office dedicated to supporting sexual assault survivors. A longtime counsellor, she started her new role this fall. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

Meanwhile, a bill that would put specific requirements, including tracking sexual assault data, on schools is working its way through the Ontario legislature.

Ryerson went a step further than putting a policy on paper, choosing to co-ordinate its existing support for survivors and its education campaigns through a central office.

"We work where the survivor is at and listen to what the survivor is asking for," said Khan.

Survivors can get help with reporting the assault, or not reporting it if that's what they choose, she said. They're also shown their options for counselling and support groups.

With more schools creating policies, METRAC, a Toronto charity that's studied the issue of campus sexual assault, has some recommendations on how they can do it well.

It starts with listening to students, then reviewing policies every few years, METRAC program co-ordinator Andrea Gunraj said.

The problem with most campus sexual assault policies that they are overly general, Gunraj said. A good policy clearly explains what will happen after a sexual assault is reported and lets survivors know what to expect after the file a report. Universities also need to explain how survivors' safety and privacy will be protected after the assault, Gunraj said.

All policies should also be accompanied by a prevention campaign, directed toward students who might not understand sexual consent, she said.

ALERT SYSTEM

Stay aware of risks

METRAC has launched an alert system to inform the public about sexual assaults in the community. Check it out at metrac.org/sisto METRO

SHOOTING

Third suspect charged

A third Toronto man has been charged with attempted murder and kidnapping in connection with the Oct. 16 shooting of a Peel Regional Police officer and a civilian on a residential Brampton street.

Peel Regional Police announced today that David Lee Kawal, 23, has been charged with two counts of attempted murder, two counts of kidnapping and numerous firearms-related offences.

Both the officer — an acting sergeant with seven years on the force — and the civilian shooting victims are recovering from their wounds.

Investigators say one civilian was found at the scene suffering gunshot wounds, while a second victim was located nearby and was uninjured.

Christopher Osborne, 25, and Tyrel Nicholson, 23, both of Toronto, have also been charged with two counts each of attempted murder, two counts each of kidnapping and numerous firearms charges.

BRAMPTON GUARDIAN

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MARK ERNSTING

Memorial builds at site of man's killing

Jessica Smith Cross
Metro | Toronto

A growing display of flowers and candles now marks the spot where Mark Ernsting was killed in a random downtown stabbing earlier this week.

Shirley Hanak walked to the McGill Street memorial on Thursday morning, pausing to say a prayer.

She didn't know Ernsting but was moved when she heard the 39-year-old researcher had been working to cure pancreatic cancer, the disease that killed Hanak's father.

The memorial LIZ BEDDALL/METRO

She lives a few blocks away and often walks through the neighbourhood — just east of Yonge Street and north of Gerrard. She considers the neighbourhood safe, but can't help think it could have been her who died Tuesday night.

"I could have been coming down this way. Anybody could have," she said.

John, who declined to give his last name, lives a few doors from the place where Ernsting — out for his nightly walk — was killed. He left flowers at the memorial Thursday.

"It's incredibly sad," he said. "This is the very least that I can do. It's an unfortunate and grim reminder that we live in a big city."

Mariya Li, who moved to the area four months ago, feels a little more uncomfortable.

"Of course, we live close to Yonge Street and sometimes can see people passing by, but it's always been very safe," she said. "Not any more."

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HUDSON'S BAY

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Rosemarie Junor, as seen in a Toronto police handout photo. THE CANADIAN PRESS

'She was building a family'

PATH STABBING

Family mourns 'random' death of newlywed

There was a summer wedding. Then in September, the newlyweds bought their first home. They were about to host their first Christmas — and just beginning to lay the foundation of the rest of their lives.

But last Friday, Rosemarie Junor was stabbed in a PATH Shoppers Drug Mart, just steps from where she worked, in what appears to have been a random attack.

Junor died of her injuries in hospital Wednesday night. On Thursday, Toronto police identified the 28-year-old, known to friends as Kim.

"She was building a family," her older brother, Richard Junor, told Torstar News Service on Thursday. "She was just starting out... It's all gone now."

The Scarborough townhouse was decorated with stars and Christmas garlands — incongruously cheerful.

"She could have been anyone. She could have been you." Richard said of the seemingly random attack. "We all have good and bad, but my sister — she was an angel. She still is, to me."

Police were called to a Shoppers Drug Mart outlet beneath the Toronto-Dominion Centre at 2:55 p.m. Dec. 11, after reports of a stabbing. According to police, a woman armed with a knife approached the victim and stabbed her in a "vital organ" in a "completely random act of violence."

Rohinie Bisesar, 40, was arrested Tuesday afternoon in connection with the attack and initially charged with attempted murder, aggravated assault and carrying a concealed weapon.

The homicide unit has now taken over the investigation, and charges against Bisesar have been upgraded to second-degree murder. Her next court appearance is scheduled for Friday morning.

Born in Trinidad to a family of South Asian descent, Junor was the youngest of four siblings and lived in Canada for more than 20 years.

Junor worked as a support specialist at Medcan, a private healthcare clinic at Adelaide and York streets, less than 500 metres from where she was attacked.

"Our organization is like a big family, and we are all grieving today for this loss," said Medcan chief operating officer Brett Laschinger. "We are all just devastated." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

"I'm telling you, that's my baby. That was my heart."
Richard Junor

Transparency is not a prize

PATH STABBING

Victims and suspects must not stay secret, despite pain

OPINION

Emma Teitel

Why was Rosemarie Junor's identity kept secret? We may never know.

What we do know, however, is that the courts — our courts — decided the victim of a random stabbing at a popular Toronto shopping centre should remain unknown. It's not the first time and it's likely not the last.

Junor's name was eventually released Thursday, a day after she died of her injuries. But why were her name and face kept secret as long as they were after her death?

Because a publication ban on the identity of the 28-year-old health professional had been requested by the Crown prosecutor.

Earlier Thursday, I found myself at a Toronto courthouse engaged in a brief, curt exchange with a member of the prosecution team, who informed me I would have to contact "media relations" about information on the publication ban still prohibiting the Toronto Star or any media outlet from revealing Junor's identity after she passed away.

I wanted to know why the Crown was being unhelpful regarding if or when it would be lifted.

I got part of my answer that afternoon, when Toronto police released Junor's name, which has now been widely publicized. But the question remains: why keep it a secret in the first place if she was not a minor or victim of a sexual assault? The truth may be, as some have reported, that the Crown originally sought the ban at the request of Junor's family as she hovered on the brink of death.

Nobody could fault a family for requesting legally enshrined privacy as they were losing a newlywed described by her brother as "an angel."

But — and it's difficult to ask — was it legally and morally appropriate for the courts to continue a publication ban after the victim had died? It's tempting to say yes — but from a broader perspective, the answer is no.

Open courts are fundamental to our democracy, and in cases where publicity does not endanger the victim, transparency should prevail.

"When we're talking about homicide," says attorney Iris Fischer, "we're not just talking about a crime against one person or one family but a crime against society."

In other words, violent crime concerns all of us, not merely (as we tend to think) in a voyeuristic way, but in a very practical way.

> **"Violent crime concerns all of us, not merely in a voyeuristic way, but in a very practical way.**

"The more people know (about a crime), the more likely people are to come forward with information," says Fischer.

Victims' names and photos provoke not only public sympathy but sometimes otherwise unknown and highly useful information. You might be thinking: but in Junor's case, all signs point to random horrific attack by what might be an exceedingly mentally ill person. How could new information from the public help in an instance like this, where the victim and perpetrator are most likely unknown to one another?

The truth is that even if transparency in a case like Junor's were to provide no new or valuable leads, and even if it were to cause the victim's family pain, it must be upheld on principle alone — or else set a disturbing precedent in the legal system, where publication bans may be granted arbitrarily.

"The Supreme Court has said the open court system is fundamental to a democratic society," says attorney Iain MacKinnon. "And once you start making exceptions, chipping away at that, you start down the slippery slope until you don't really have an open court anymore. Accused people charged with offences could say: 'Well, why would I need to be identified?'"

A victim like Junor may seem worthy of a publication ban, but if courts grant such bans on sympathy alone they may make it easier in the future for less worthy candidates — say, people charged with crimes — to benefit from court-sanctioned privacy. There are no easy answers, MacKinnon adds.

Nobody — let alone the police, press or justice system — wants to add pain to the lives of crime victims or their families. But our courts must remain transparent, even in the face of pain. The question isn't "Why doesn't a victim deserve a publication ban?" but "Why does she?"

Transparency is not a prize — something the press must barter or fight for. It's the foundation of our democracy.

Rohinie Bisesar could be named in the media, and even pictured, but her alleged victim could not. TORONTO POLICE SERVICE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Scheming for a white Christmas

WEATHER

Ways exist to make it snow, make it snow, make it snow

Luke Simcoe
Metro | Toronto

As Toronto continues to bask in balmy winter weather, die-hard snow seekers are getting desperate.

"We've had at least a dozen calls this week from people asking for a white Christmas," said Brad Weiss, a manager at Acme FX, a special-effects company in Toronto that specializes in fake snow.

Just shy of one centimetre of snow has landed in Toronto all winter, "barely enough to qualify as a trace," according to the Weather Network. And with Environment Canada calling for above-seasonal temperatures well into January, the odds of snow on — or even around — Christmas are pretty much zip.

However, there's snow to be found in the city, as long as you're not concerned about authenticity. Acme FX sells bags full of fake snow and rents out snow machines that can simulate falling flakes using a non-toxic liquid.

In October, the company helped provide all the snow for an early Santa Claus Parade for the late Evan Leversage — the young boy from St. George, Ont., with a fatal brain tumour. They also recently helped a couple add some falling snow to their wedding ceremony.

Unfortunately, Acme caters primarily to the film industry and will be closed during the holidays. That means no house calls, Weiss said.

"If the weather continues the way it is, I'm thinking it might be something we should talk about doing next year," he said.

A snow cannon on full blast? There are less drastic options available.
WIKIMEDIA COMMONS
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From left: U of T students Rebecca Jeffrey, Maria Jackson and Hayley Neale take a study break in skates on the ice of a sun-drenched Nathan Phillips Square. Many Torontonians opted for light attire on Thursday as mild weather continued to embrace the city. LIZ BEDDALL/METRO

KEY ANSWERS

Where can I find real snow?
If fake snow doesn't cut it for you, finding some of the white stuff means getting out — far out — of town.

Environment Canada meteorologist Geoff Coulson said the closest place to Toronto is Wawa. Located on the shores of Lake Superior, the township is 900 kilometres northwest of Toronto.

"It's definitely not close," Coulson said.

Wawa is north enough that "lake effect" precipitation is falling as snow and sticking to the ground, Coulson said.

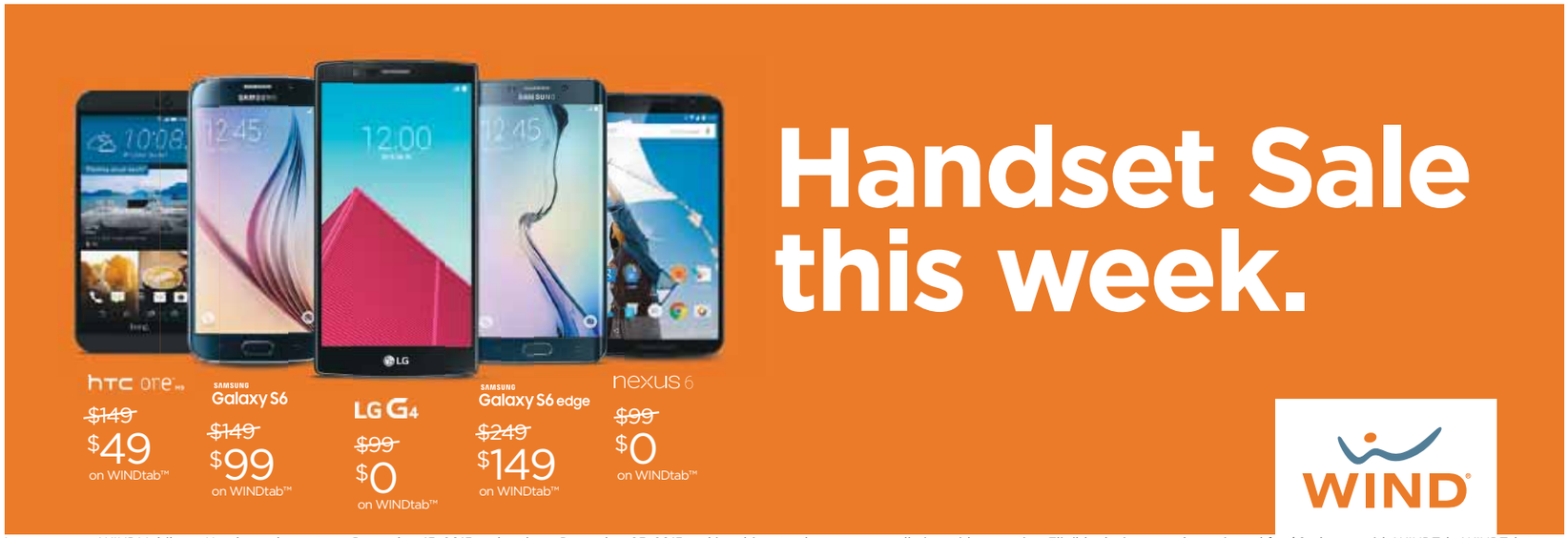
Warmest December ever?
Environment Canada is "still crunching the numbers," meteorologist Geoff Coulson said, but this December is expected to be the warmest on record in Toronto — and not by a small margin.

"We could be a degree or even two warmer than the record. It's incredible," he said. The previous record was set in December 2006.

DIY white Christmas kit
Toronto-based Acme FX rents out snow machines for $80 a day, plus the cost of liquid snow. They also sell bags of fake snow made of paper, which manager Brad Weiss says will "stick around" until it's swept up.

Over at Thomas FC, another fake-snow supplier, 10 pounds of plastic snow crystals will run you $97.

If you're looking for something on a smaller scale, Oakville-based Retro-Festive sells "snow in a can" for $2.50 plus shipping.



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Composer Kinan Azmeh was a leading figure in the effort to welcome newcomers. CONTRIBUTED

Musical greetings for Syrian refugees

REFUGEES

Orchestra helped by 'wing and a prayer miracle'

They couldn't make it to the airport to welcome newly arriving refugees, so the Toronto Symphony Orchestra made a video instead, featuring the talents of Syrian native son, clarinetist and composer Kinan Azmeh.

TSO president Jeff Melanson called the performance a "wing and prayer miracle" that involved flying Azmeh in from Paris on very short notice for one night and gathering musicians and sound technicians at Roy Thomson Hall.

"When we heard there were Syrian refugees arriving in Toronto, our hope was to be able to welcome them at the airport. But with security, there were too many issues to overcome," said orchestra CEO Jeff Melanson.

When a Syrian soloist could not be found to perform a piece by Azmeh, the composer told Melanson, "somewhat in jest, 'Well, maybe between shows, I could fly to Toronto to record it.'"

Because the orchestra was in rehearsal for its annual series of performances of Handel's Messiah — running from Dec. 16 to 20 — Melanson said, "we literally had a 45-minute window to record this thing."

Azmeh touched down just after 4 p.m. on Monday, arrived at Roy Thomson Hall at 6:10 p.m., met the orchestra, recorded a 90-second introduction and then handed over the music.

"The orchestra sight-read the piece on the spot, we did two run-throughs for recording purposes and that was that. Kinan flew back to Paris the next day," Melanson said.

"All of the artists donated for free. He didn't get paid, the TSO didn't get paid, the recording engineers didn't get paid. This was all good will."

Azmeh's "contemplative" piece was particularly apt for the occasion, Melanson said.

"He described it as a piece he wrote around a thanksgiving celebration and thinking about what it is to be a stranger suddenly welcomed in a new place. So it's a perfect fit for us," Melanson said.

"There's a mournful component to (the piece) given what these people have come through to get to us and what they've lost in the process."

The TSO is in the planning stages for future initiatives to welcome Syrian refugees, including a benefit concert and a concert for refugees to see their own culture on stage, Melanson said.

In the video, Azmeh offers his thanks to Melanson and the TSO for the initiative.

"As a Syrian, as a musician and a human, thank you very, very much. It's really moving to know that you guys are doing this," he said.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE.

> **As a Syrian, a musician and a human, thank you.**
> Kinan Azmeh

Father charged in girl's death

Police have charged a Brampton man with manslaughter after the death of his 21-month-old daughter in April.

The charge was upgraded after a report determined the cause of death to be malnutrition and dehydration by the Center of Forensic Sciences.

Frank Brian O'Dea, 42, was originally charged with criminal negligence causing death after the death of his daughter, Victoria O'Dea.

On April 20 at 11:25 p.m., police arrived at O'Dea's residence on Pappain Avenue where the 21-month year old child was found without vital signs. She was pronounced dead after being transported to a local hospital.

O'Dea is scheduled to appear in court for a bail hearing on Thursday.

Homicide investigators are asking anyone with information to assist in this investigation by contacting them at 905 -453-2121, ext. 3205.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Victoria O'Dea. GOFUNDME

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Doctors fight overhaul

MEDICINE

Health-care reforms meet resistance from practitioners

Get the fine print, stat.

Ontario doctors are concerned the province will push ahead with a new plan to overhaul its "unco-ordinated," $50-billion health-care system before physicians can get a deeper read of the proposals.

A 24-page "discussion paper" released by the health ministry on Thursday calls for family physicians to be more accountable to government through Local Health Integration Networks, which would release clinics' performance records to the public. The province also proposes closing down the "cumbersome" Community Care Access Centre program, while improving home-care delivery by adding more at-home nursing services for those who need them, among other initiatives.

"Given the magnitude of the changes being considered and the lack of details provided, Ontario's doctors have concerns with the timeline laid out for discussion," said Dr. Mike Toth, president of the Ontario Medical Association.

Senior staff from the OMA met with health ministry officials Thursday morning to be briefed on the report. They were told the consultations would happen over the next few months, spokeswoman Danielle Milley told the Star. She would not say how much time the OMA is looking for.

"Any reform to Ontario's health-care system must draw on the expertise and ideas of doctors, who are on the front lines providing care to patients every day," Toth said.

The ministry's paper, "Patients First," calls for the creation of LHIN sub-regions that would help match unattached patients to primary care providers. These sub-LHINs would allow the ministry to "methodically measure patient outcomes in primary care to help understand the patient experience accessing primary care, including same-day and after-hours care."

More than half of Ontarians cannot see their family physician within two days of being sick and have trouble accessing care during evenings or weekends.

The proposed changes would help create what Health Minister Eric Hoskins has described as a "front door to our medical system that is open 24/7."

Ontario Health Minister Eric Hoskins CHRIS YOUNG/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Of course, it may be easier said than done, particularly in under-serviced rural areas where many physicians have neither an electronic record system nor the funds to implement one.

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario praised the province's blueprint for change.

Ontarians "will see faster access and a more co-ordinated approach to their care," said Doris Grinspun, RNAO's chief executive officer.

TORSTAR NEW SERVICE

51 DIVISION

Police officer honoured for heroism

A 51 Division police officer is among four Canadians honoured by the international Carnegie Foundation for Heroes.

Const. Clifford Peterson, 40, won his citation for risking his life to save a man from a suicide attempt on Toronto's Castle Frank Bridge on Dec. 8, 2013.

The man initially resisted the night Peterson and his partner, Const. Jeff Wesley, apprehended him under the Mental Health Act and saved his life.

In the end, he was grateful.

"He was a gamut of emotions," Peterson earlier told the TPS News. "He just said, 'Thank you for saving me.' It felt good. I hope he is doing better now."

The Carnegie Foundation noted that the two police officers found the distressed man at the end of the bridge abutment, 30 metres above ground.

Peterson boosted himself onto the snow and ice-covered abutment.

"When the man then moved closer to the edge and pushed himself off, Peterson lunged across the abutment, grasped the man from behind, and, lying unsecured on his stomach, held the man against the outside face of the abutment," the Foundation report continues.

The man tried to struggle away and pulled Peterson partially off the abutment before his partner grabbed him by the ankles and pulled him to safety.

"All I felt then was my partner grabbing me by the ankles," Peterson told the TPS News.

Peterson earlier won the Ontario Medal for Police Bravery for his actions.

The Canadians honoured by the Carnegie Foundation are among 24 people from across North America honoured. Four of the honourees died while performing their heroic acts.

"The medal is given to those who risk their lives to an extraordinary degree while saving or attempting to save the lives of others," the fund said in a statement.

Helen Goulet, 72, of Courtenay, B.C., won her citation for dragging an 89-year-old friend to safety from a burning home on Jan. 25, 2015.

RCMP Const. Fraser Potts, from Limoges near Ottawa, risked chilling waters and a swift current to save a woman from a suicide attempt in Fairford, Man., on May 10, 2013.

Golf pro Joshua Gardner, 36, of Calgary, swam into a pond on a golf course to pull a man from a sport utility vehicle on July 5, 2014. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Clifford Peterson has received international honours for saving a man's life. COURTESY TPS NEWS

THE AWARD

The Carnegie Medal is given to those who risk their lives to an extraordinary degree while saving or attempting to save the lives of others.

OUTBREAK

Another raccoon found with rabies

A sixth raccoon has tested positive for rabies in the Hamilton area as Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry workers continue their efforts to control the outbreak by spreading rabies vaccine baits.

So far five raccoons have tested positive in Hamilton, one in the lower city near King Street East and Gray Road and the other four on the South Mountain. The most recent discovery was near where a rabid raccoon had previously been found off Dickenson Road.

The other diseased raccoon was discovered in Cayuga. No humans are known to have contracted the disease. For information go to hamilton.ca/public-health/health-topics/rabies.

Ministry officials released a map Thursday showing the locations where the raccoons were found and the two types of zones that are receiving baits in a wide area stretching from North Burlington to Lake Erie.

High density baiting (150 baits per square kilometre) is taking place in the pink sections of the map. Low density baiting (75 per square kilometre) is taking place in the yellow-coloured regions. The baits are being distributed by air and by hand on the ground.

Up to 185,000 baits are expected to be used by ministry workers before the end of the year. HAMILTON SPECTATOR

McGuinty ex-staffers charged

POLITICS

Former aides due in court over gas plants scandal

Criminal charges have been laid against former premier Dalton McGuinty's two top aides after a lengthy OPP probe into deleted computer hard drives linked to the Liberals' cancelled gas-fired power plants.

David Livingston, 63, McGuinty's last chief of staff, and deputy chief Laura Miller, 36, were charged Thursday with breach of trust, mischief in relation to data, and misuse of a computer system.

They will appear in court on Jan. 27 and face up to 10 years in prison if convicted.

Through his lawyer, Livingston, a former TD investment banker who also headed Infrastructure Ontario, emphasized he "certainly did not break the law as alleged."

"He was consistently open about his actions in the premier's office. He always believed that those actions were proper and in accordance with normal practices. And he has co-operated with the police investigation," said Fredrick Schumann.

"We are confident that he will be vindicated," said Schumann.

The charges against Miller are a surprise. While police consistently said Livingston was a person of interest in the case, her name was never mentioned.

"I intend to vigorously defend against these charges," said Miller, who stepped down Wednesday night as executive director of the British Columbia Liberal Party.

"After formally complaining about the conduct of the OPP in the way that they acted during their investigation into document retention, I find myself being charged," she said, referring to her complaint to the Ontario Independent Police Review Director about the OPP.

"I have always had trust and confidence in the police. Today, that is not so."

Her lawyer, Clayton Ruby, was incredulous.

"This is the office of the premier of Ontario, for God's sake! No records get destroyed there. They just get stored somewhere else," Ruby said in an email.

Ontario Provincial Police Det. Supt. Dave Truax said the charges against Miller had nothing to do with her complaint about his officers.

"Of course not. The charges are laid as a result of the information learned in the criminal investigation," Truax said.

OPP Commissioner Vince Hawkes explained why the probe, which began in June 2013, took so long.

"This was a complex matter that included interviews with several persons in many locations, as well as thorough examinations of large amounts of electronic data," said Hawkes.

McGuinty, who was never under investigation and co-operated with police throughout, was not available Thursday.

But his lawyer Ronald Caza said: "Today's events again confirm there was no wrongdoing on the part of the former premier."

The charges stem from the anti-rackets investigation into deleted hard drives related to the power plants the Liberals cancelled in Mississauga and Oakville before the 2011 election.

Livingston allegedly gave a special computer password to a non-government employee — Peter Faist, Miller's common-law spouse — enabling him to wipe drives in the premier's office as the McGuinty era drew to a close in 2013.

Faist, a computer specialist who has denied any wrongdoing and faces no charges, was paid $10,000 from the taxpayer-funded Liberal caucus budget. The party subsequently repaid the sum to the public treasury.

Opposition parties accuse the Liberal government of scrapping the gas plants — which faced community opposition — to keep five Oakville and Mississauga-area ridings in party hands.

The Oakville project was axed in October 2010 and the Mississauga facility the following September, less than two weeks before the tightly fought 2011 provincial election that reduced McGuinty's Liberals to a minority.

A report from Ontario auditor general Bonnie Lysyk estimated that scuttling the plants and moving them to Sarnia and Napanee could cost up to $1.1 billion over 20 years.

Thursday's charges complete an investigation that began after two Conservative MPPs wrote the OPP to outline suspicions about deleted documents and a cover-up.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

1 Dalton McGuinty — The former Ontario premier leaves the Queen's Park legislature building after testifying in a Justice Policy committee hearing. Laura Miller is on the right. BERNARD WEIL/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

2 David Livingston — Dalton McGuinty's former chief of staff appeared at the gas plant hearings at Queen's Park in September 2013. LUCAS OLENIUK/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

3 Laura Miller — Dalton McGuinty's ex-deputy chief of staff said she no longer has trust and confidence in the police. ROB FERGUSON/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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GTA

Nurses concussed in attack

Two nurses have been repeatedly punched in the head during an attack at a GTA mental health facility.

It took place at St. Joseph's Healthcare's West 5th Campus in Hamilton on Wednesday.

One nurse was left unconscious. Both were taken by ambulance for emergency treatment.

A 22-year-old patient has been charged by police with assault, and the Ministry of Labour is investigating.

The attack has raised questions about St. Joseph's Healthcare's slow response to implementing measures to improve staff safety.

"For 18 months, the Ontario Nurses' Association has been trying to get anti-violence actions taken by St. Joe's," said Linda Haslam-Stroud, provincial president of the union and a Hamilton nurse. "It has taken them 18 months of back-and-forth arguing for them to finally come to some conclusions."

The attack proves the need for increased safety measures being put in place in January, the union says.

Patients tried to help the nurses during the breakfast attack in the schizophrenia unit at the West 5th Campus.

First, a registered nurse was attacked. Then, a registered practical nurse, a health-care professional, tried to help her and was also beaten. HAMILTON SPECTATOR

IN BRIEF

Man arrested for alleged sex assaults on TTC

A 78-year-old man has been arrested in a series of sexual assaults targeting women on TTC vehicles across city.

The man was known to make "physical contact and sexually assault them," police said. Following an investigation that began in September, Cheuk-Hang Lo was charged Wednesday with three counts of sexual assault.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Hussam Majbour, a former Syrian refugee, received his Canadian citizenship and is taking computer networking courses. For many months when he first arrived, he went through dark days of anxiety and depression. CHRIS SO/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Refugees 'need to feel included'

RESETTLEMENT

Post-migration support key to Syrians' mental health

A former refugee from Syria, Hussam Majbour, is no stranger to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness.

Although the 34-year-old man fled Damascus to Toronto in 2008 — years before his homeland plunged into turmoil, sparking the worst humanitarian crisis since the Second World War — he understands that reaching a land of safety is just the beginning for the 25,000 Syrian refugees starting to arrive in Canada.

Soon, said Majbour, the new, stressful reality of securing housing, jobs, schools and a social support network will sink in — and that's when the newcomers' mental health will be most vulnerable.

"They have lost everything and left behind repression and poor conditions back home. It is important they have housing, jobs and social support," said Majbour, who has a degree in English literature and has found support by volunteering as an interpreter at the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture.

"They need to feel included and welcomed and be connected with their new community. Mental health could be an issue if they are isolated, without the social support they need."

While many who'll be arriving in Canada in the coming months will have experienced first-hand the horrors of war, and perhaps have lost loved ones, experts say worries over the resettled Syrians' psychiatric needs are overblown.

In fact, the World Health Organization estimates that less than 4 per cent of the adult Syrian refugee population suffers from severe mental disorders such as psychosis, severe depression or anxiety that cripples their functioning.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

WELL-BEING PROMOTING RESILIENCE

Debra Stein CONTRIBUTED

While health professionals only play a small part, mostly in cases involving severe psychiatric problems, front-line immigrant settlement workers are really the ones tasked with the newcomers' overall well-being, including their mental health.

Debra Stein, who co-heads the migration team at the Hincks-Dellcrest Centre mental health service in Toronto, said many cases she has seen are the outcome of unmet needs.

"They came out of war, conflicts and atrocities. We need to promote their resilience and offer them proper post-migration support. The big message here is resilience, not pathology," said Stein. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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- foam food containers & protective packaging
- paper gift wrap, cards (no foil wrap)

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- breads
- cakes, cookies
- fruits, vegetables
- paper napkins
- paper plates

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks with reporters in Ottawa on Wednesday.
PATRICK DOYLE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

No need to open Constitution: PM

POLITICS

Trudeau says he'd rather focus on jobs, health care

Justin Trudeau says there is no pressing problem facing the country that can only be resolved by opening the Constitution — a laborious, time-consuming road the new prime minister has no intention of going down.

That includes the fact that Quebec has never formally signed onto the Constitution, which was patriated in 1982 with a charter of rights by Trudeau's father, Pierre, over the objections of the province's then-separatist government.

SENATE

Some politicians have argued that the Constitution should be opened to abolish or reform the Senate. But Trudeau has opted instead for reforms that can be implemented without changing the Constitution.

"What I ask now to anyone who offers to open the Constitution, or says we should open the Constitution, is: what concrete problem are we trying to solve that is unsolvable without opening the Constitution?" Trudeau said during a 75-minute sit-down with the Ottawa bureau of The Canadian Press.

"I'd rather be talking about climate change and energy issues and job creation and training and health care and all these things that will make a concrete difference in people's lives."

Trudeau scoffed at a suggestion that Quebec's continued refusal to sign the Constitution is a major problem.

"Which articulates itself how?" he asked rhetorically.

Some Quebecers will always complain that Quebec is excluded from the Constitution, Trudeau acknowledged. But the Constitution does in fact apply to the province and nothing in it has limited Quebec's ability to deliver health care or education or take action on the issues that matter most to Quebecers, he said. THE CANADIAN PRESS

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Another baby whale for J-pod

The endangered killer whale population off British Columbia's coast is experiencing a baby boom.

Scientists say an eighth calf has been born to the so-called J-pod of southern resident killer whales that's been growing over the past year.

The Washington state-based Center for Whale Research says a suspected new baby was spotted on Dec. 1 near San Juan Island, but only confirmed the new addition after another sighting on Wednesday.

The calf was photographed in Haro Strait between San Juan Islands and Vancouver Island and is estimated to be two-and-a-half to three weeks old.

A calf swims with its mother off the coast. HANDOUT

The centre says the last time the population grew so quickly was in 1977 with nine new whales, while most years only see an average of three babies.

The scientists believe the 84-member J-pod is journeying to the Strait of Georgia, where it spent time last December. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Memo discloses Bill C-27 options

FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY

Non-compliant First Nations were to be punished

The Canadian government considered punishing First Nations who refused to comply with controversial financial transparency legislation by putting someone else in control of their books, according to newly released documents.

The Toronto Star obtained a memo prepared for former aboriginal affairs minister Bernard Valcourt in February — released in response to an access-to-information request — recommending options for dealing with First Nations that had not yet complied with the First Nations Financial Transparency Act (Bill C-27).

The law, brought in by the previous Conservative government, requires First Nations to submit financial documents, including audited financial statements and the salaries and expenses of chiefs and band councilors, to be published on the Indigenous and Northern Affairs website.

The partially redacted memo at one point discusses the idea of placing non-compliant First Nations under third-party management, which means a private-sector consultant — whose salary must be covered by the First Nation — would take over the administration of money associated with departmentally funded programs and services.

AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde speaks at the Assembly of First Nations Special Chiefs Assembly in Gatineau on Dec. 8. ADRIAN WYLD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

The memo acknowledges this would be a risky move.

"Imposing a third-party funding agreement manager as a sanction of non-compliance for First Nations must be carefully considered and should be aligned with the funding agreement. An assessment of the default situation and potential risks to delivery of community programs and services should be considered," reads the memo dated Feb. 26.

"There is a potential risk to the (department)'s default management policy framework of employing third-party management as a sanction," says the memo.

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett was not made available for an interview in time for publication and neither was anyone at the department. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

> **I'm not surprised they would have considered it as a tool, but the tool as a hammer doesn't work any longer.** New Democrat indigenous affairs critic Charlie Angus

IN BRIEF

Ukraine wants more Canadian police trainers

Ukraine's newly appointed national police chief is asking Justin Trudeau's Liberal government for more help in establishing and training a professional security force. Khatia Dekanoidze made the pitch to both RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson and Foreign Affairs Minister Stephane Dion in separate meetings over the last two days.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

AFGHAN WAR

Petition demands judicial inquiry

Canada's exercise in e-democracy is getting its first major — perhaps incendiary — test from a former New Democrat MP and his online petition demanding a judicial inquiry into the alleged torture of prisoners during the Afghan war.

Former Toronto MP Craig Scott, who lost in the Oct. 19 election, says despite Federal Court battles and an inquiry by a military watchdog, many unanswered questions remain about what the former Conservative government knew about the suspected abuse of Canadian-captured prisoners.

A new House of Commons petition process, which went digital earlier this month, allows people with an interest in federal policy to register their support electronically.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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‘This is the enemy of our time’

DEFENCE

Canada’s top soldier warns of grave danger ISIL poses

The Islamic State and the radicalized extremist movement is the “enemy of our time” and Canadian fighter pilots have been “superb” in their bombing missions against them, Canada’s top soldier says.

Well-financed, able to access weapons and able to inspire attacks from its Middle East hub, the Islamic State is a deadly and dangerous foe, Gen. Jonathan Vance, the chief of defence staff, said.

“There’s no question that the potential for the spread of militarized radicals, no matter where they come from, that’s a very dangerous threat vector,” Vance said this week.

“They can grow. They can, as we’ve seen with ISIL, they can get their hands on funds. Imagine if they are so well-equipped that they become difficult to fight on the ground, which they can. There are weapons that are easy to buy in the world,” he said.

And the top general said that November’s terror attacks in Paris, which left more than 100 dead, highlight the ability of radical militants to “reach out, they can motivate others.”

“It is, I suggest to you, the enemy of our time, this radicalized, militarized enemy. We faced them in Afghanistan and now here we are now facing them in Iraq,” said Vance.

The comments come as the new Liberal government prepares to announce a new role for Canada in the fight against ISIS, one that doesn’t involve combat. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau pledged during the election to end the bombing missions by Canadian jets.

Vance says there is no sting to the decision to withdraw from the combat mission.

“The military is pretty accustomed to decision-making around their employment ... we do serve at the request of government and we do what they ask,” Vance said. “If anyone was to say that what they did wasn’t important or they weren’t performing a role well while they were there, yeah, that would sting. But I haven’t heard anybody say that.

“In fact we know that Canada’s contribution up until now has been superb and very much appreciated by the allies and very much unappreciated by ISIL, which is a great way to be,” Vance said.

But the general also made clear that radicalized messaging, which can influence people here in Canada, is also a serious worry. “They can affect us, our children. We’ve seen it. We’re concerned about it,” Vance said. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

> **We know that Canada’s contribution up until now has been superb and very much appreciated by the allies.**
> General Jonathan Vance

Gen. Jonathan Vance, Canada’s chief of defence staff, says the nation’s contribution to the fight against Islamic State has been appreciated by allies. FRED CHARTRAND/THE CANADIAN PRESS

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POLITICS

New proposals for troubled memorial

Michael Woods
Metro | Ottawa

It’s back to the drawing board for the controversial memorial to the victims of communism, — a new location, a new design and a smaller budget.

On Thursday, the federal government squashed their predecessors’ much-maligned plan to build the memorial on land southwest of the Supreme Court building in Ottawa.

That location was opposed by Ottawa’s city council, community and architectural groups and Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin.

Heritage Minister Mélanie Joly said the memorial will instead be built at the Garden of the Provinces and Territories.

Joly said she consulted more than 30 people and there was consensus that the memorial should be moved there.

“It is a place clearly accessible to residents and visitors,” she said. The design of the memorial, which has also come under criticism, will be scrapped.

Joly said a new design competition will be launched in the new year, with a view to completing the memorial by 2018.

The planned $5.5-million budget is also no more, but Joly said the federal government is still helping to fund it, with contributions capped at $1.5 million.

That represents half of the project’s new cost. The project’s proponent, charity organization Tribute to Liberty, will be responsible for the other half.

An updated Memorial design image that was presented at the June 2015 National Capital Commission Board meeting. HANDOUT/THE CANADIAN PRESS

IN BRIEF

Canadian bombers lead major ISIL offensive

Canadian military forces were very much in the thick of a major offensive by the Islamic State against Kurdish forces in northern Iraq on Thursday.

Two CF-18s struck a fighting position belonging to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, northwest of occupied Mosul, the embattled country’s second-largest city. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Trudeau unlikely to push Saudis on Badawi case

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says he isn’t planning to call Saudi Arabian authorities to ask that jailed blogger Raif Badawi be freed.

Trudeau said he won’t pick up the phone right now on behalf of Badawi, who was sentenced to 1,000 lashes and 10 years in jail for his criticism of Saudi clerics.

“It’s not in my immediate plans,” he said Wednesday. “Raif Badawi has a family who are here in Canada, which gives a certain connection,” Trudeau said. “It’s a humanitarian case on which we continue to express ourselves in a clear fashion.” THE CANADIAN PRESS

Ben Early yawns before classes at Roosevelt High School in Seattle. The Seattle school board voted last month to adopt an 8:45 a.m. start time beginning next year for all of its high schools and most of its middle schools. ELAINE THOMPSON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Let sleeping teens lie: Researchers

EDUCATION

Eight too early to start class, experts say

More school districts around the U.S. are heeding the advice of scientists who have long said that expecting teens to show up to class before 8 a.m. isn't good for their health or their report cards.

The Seattle school board voted last month to adopt an 8:45 a.m. start time beginning next year for all of its high schools and most of its middle schools, joining 70 districts across the nation who adopted a later start time in recent years.

The movement still has a long way to go: There are more than 24,000 U.S. high schools. Supporters expect that such decisions will be made more quickly now that people have mostly stopped debating the underlying science.

Proponents of later start times got a boost last year when the American Academy of Pediatrics said that while starting later isn't a panacea for teen health and academic problems, it can improve students' lives in many other ways.

"Essentially, across the board, any domain that you look at improves pretty dramatically," said Dr. Judy Owens of Boston Children's Hospital and author of the academy's policy statement on teen sleep. After the report, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also pushed for later bell times.

Research studies have shown later start times help combat sleep deprivation in teens, who naturally fall asleep later than their parents would like, and improve academic success, attendance, mental health and cut sleep-related car accidents.

Bridget Shelton, a freshman at Seattle's Roosevelt High School, believes the change in bell times will help her move from getting 6-7 hours of sleep to closer to 8 hours next year.

"I know many students that come in and are just struggling to stay awake," she said.

"Many of my friends are falling asleep in class."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

70

School districts in the U.S. have moved to adopt a later start time for middle and high schools.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Putin describes Trump as 'bright and talented'
Vladimir Putin says Donald Trump is "bright and talented." The Russian word he used not only means "bright" in terms of intelligence, but also "gaudy."
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Donald vs. Kimmel
In an appearance on Jimmy Kimmel's late-night show Wednesday, Donald Trump was questioned about campaign issues, saying he's gotten calls of thanks from friends who are Muslim. "Those may have been crank calls," Kimmel replied.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BALTIMORE

Hung jury means retrial in Freddie Gray case

Instead of a dramatic conclusion to the first of six trials of police officers in the death of Freddie Gray, the mistrial left Baltimore, Md., in suspense and confusion, with no immediate understanding of what happens next.

The city had braced for a possible repeat of the protests, destruction and dismay that engulfed the city in April after Gray's neck was broken in the back of a police van.

But several small marches ended peacefully overnight as the community tried to process the news.

Baltimore Circuit Judge Barry Williams acknowledged the hung jury Wednesday after the panel deadlocked over whether Officer William Porter had committed any crimes by failing to take measures that might have saved the life of the young black man, who was shackled and placed face down in the wagon after running from police.

Back at square one, prosecutors and defence attorneys met in Williams' chambers Thursday morning to discuss dates for a possible retrial.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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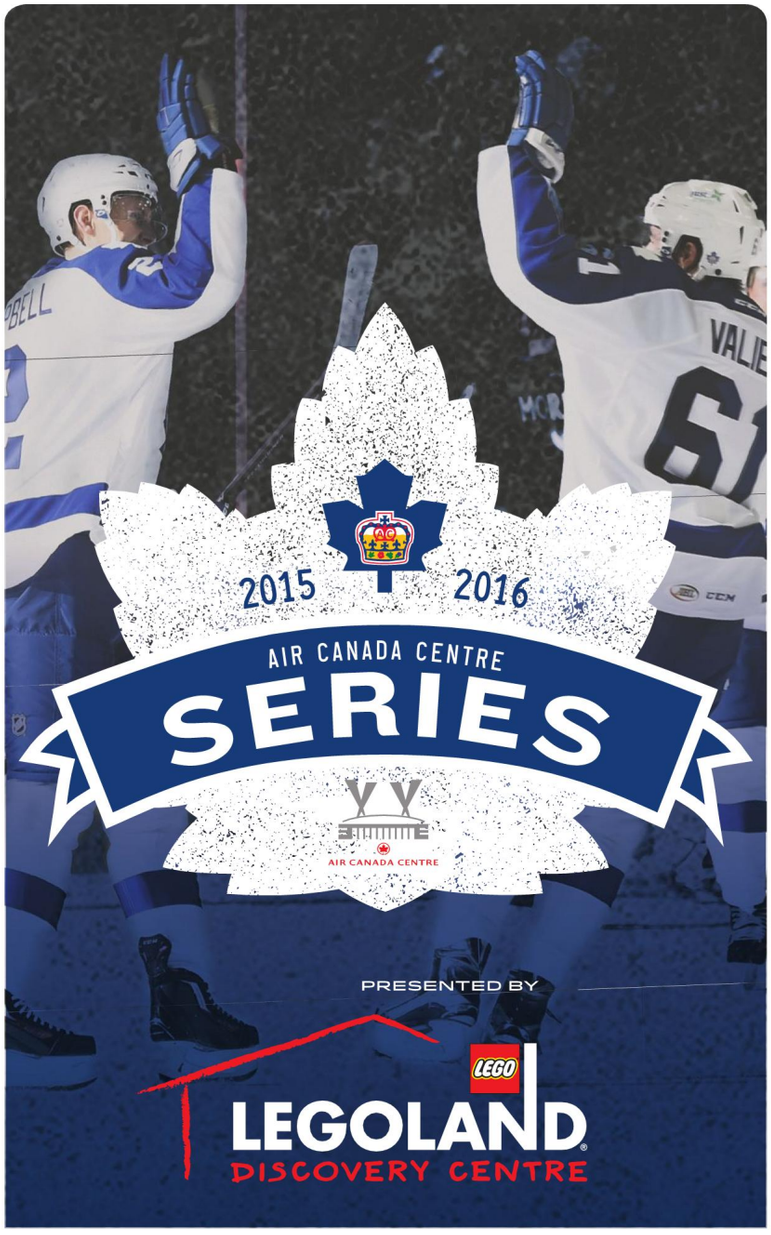

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Migrants make their way towards a refugee camp near Rigonce, Slovenia, after crossing the **Croatian-Slovenian border** in October. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Global refugee numbers top 20M

REPORT

Syrian war main cause of displacement, UN reveals

The global refugee population has surpassed the 20-million mark for the first time since 1992 while the number of those returning home is at its lowest level, says the United Nations refugee agency.

According to its 2015 mid-year update report, an average of 4,600 people are being forced to flee their countries every day as Syria's war remains the single biggest cause worldwide of both new refugees and continuing mass internal and external displacement.

By the end of June, there were 20.2 million refugees — up from 19.5 million a year ago — and 34 million internally displaced people (IDP) — up by 2 million — around the world.

In the first six months of the year, the international community received 993,600 asylum claims, accounting for a 78 per cent increase over the same period in 2014, said the report to be released in Geneva on Friday.

"Forced displacement is now profoundly affecting our times. It touches the lives of millions of our fellow human beings — both those forced to flee and those who provide them with shelter and protection," said United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres in a statement.

"Never has there been a greater need for tolerance, compassion and solidarity with people who have lost everything."

While Canada's expedited resettlement of 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of February is one bright spot amid the world crisis, the report also shows some worrisome trends.

Voluntary return rates — which measures how many refugees have safely returned home — are at their lowest levels in three decades. By June, only 84,000 people managed to go back to their home countries, compared to 107,000 in the same period last year.

The consequence of having more refugees stuck in exile is the pressure it puts on countries hosting them, something if unmanaged, "can increase resentment and abet politicization of refugees."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

An Iranian child at a makeshift camp by the **Greek-Macedonian border.** GETTY IMAGES

WHERE THEY'RE COMING FROM

Most common source countries for refugees

1. **Syria:** 4.2 million. Fleeing civil war and the threat of extremist group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).
2. **Afghanistan:** 2.6 million. Fleeing the Taliban terrorist group.
3. **Somalia:** 1.1 million. Fleeing insurgency led by Al-Shabab.
4. **South Sudan:** 744,100. Fleeing civil war.
5. **Sudan:** 640,900. Fleeing civil war.

SOURCE: UNITED NATIONS REFUGEE AGENCY 2015 MID-YEAR REPORT

'World is a living mosaic'

SOCIAL MEDIA

Campaign to highlight migrants' contributions

Migrants from around the world are sharing their life stories in a unique "I am a Migrant" campaign, launched by the International Organization of Migration to remind the world of the value of migrants.

Hundreds of people — including a Somali woman who moved to Canada to go to university, a French woman in Georgia and a Congolese artist in Mauritania — are participating in the global social media campaign, posting their profiles and photos on the website iamamigrant.org.

"We know from economic reports the incredible contributions migrants make. But it is easy to forget that," said Leonard Doyle, IOM spokesman. "We have to remind ourselves the world is a living mosaic and that makes it much richer."

The campaign comes at a time when the news has been focused on scenes of desperate refugees, and the sometimes extreme political reactions those images have provoked.

Doyle hopes showing the value of migrants through positive stories will shift the political narrative and counter xenophobia and anti-immigrant rhetoric prevalent in parts of Europe.

The Mexican government, an enthusiastic participant, will put "Soy Migrante" posters on display next month.

Facebook in Germany has also lent support, donating online advertising space. Four videos have been posted in German on Facebook in the last two days, garnering five million views as of noon Thursday.

The campaign — launched in time for the UN's International Migrants Day — builds on a crowd-funded initiative "I am an Immigrant," introduced earlier this year in the U.K. by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Reflections on life in a new country **1 Lauriane, from France, now in Georgia** — "Everyone refers to people like me as 'expats.' In reality, I am a migrant." **2 Nadifo, from Somalia, now in Canada** — "I think Canada is a good country, where multiculturalism is practised, where so many people are there together in peace." **3 Mihir, from India, now in the U.K.** — Mihir immigrated to the U.K. many years ago to follow his dream to become a journalist. "I feel Indian but I feel British, too. This is a duality." **4 Rahi, from Iraq, now in Belgium** — "(My family has been) given so many opportunities here that Belgium has become our second home." ALL PHOTOS VIA IAMAMIGRANT.ORG

EUROPE

EU plans border force

European Union heavyweights France and Germany on Thursday backed a potentially divisive plan for a border guard agency with powers to unilaterally deploy to member states unable or unwilling to manage their borders.

The border and coast guard project is chiefly aimed at protecting Europe's external borders in countries like Greece and Italy as they struggle to manage the arrival of hundreds of thousands of people fleeing conflict or poverty for better lives in Europe.

But the idea the agency could send ships, planes or other assets to a country even if it opposes the deployment is reviving fears about a loss of national sovereignty to unelected officials at the EU's executive Commission in Brussels.

Countries further north in Europe like Germany and Sweden — the preferred destinations of many migrants — are keen to have tighter controls to ease the flow of people, as is France. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Tunisians celebrate birth of Arab Spring

ANNIVERSARY

Five years since start of movement in Arab world

Tunisians who won the Nobel Peace Prize joined townspeople in the country's beleaguered heartland Thursday to mark five years since a desperate street vendor set himself on fire, unwittingly setting in motion upheaval across the Arab world.

Children waved Tunisian flags, horsemen in traditional clothing paraded and crowds sang the national anthem during a celebration around the central plaza of Sidi Bouzid. But disenchantment tinged the celebrations of a revolution that brought Tunisia a budding democracy.

Unemployment remains rife, and Tunisia is grappling with the threat of violent Islamic extremism, now ravaging the region from neighbouring Libya to Syria, after uprisings inspired by Tunisia's revolt that led to lawlessness or civil war.

Members of the Tunisian quartet of non-governmental groups that won this year's Nobel took part in a series of events Thursday in Sidi Bouzid, the epicentre of Tunisia's revolution, where fruit vendor Mohamed Bouazizi set himself alight on Dec. 17, 2010.

It was a personal gesture of protest by Bouazizi, 27, who died of his injuries. But his cry of despair captured the plight of the poor and jobless and echoed throughout the North African country, triggering protests that left 300 dead and thousands injured.

Within a month, the country's autocratic ruler, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, had fled to Saudi Arabia after nearly a quarter-century as president — and soon protests erupted in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain and Morocco.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tunisians take part in a ceremony on Thursday in the central town of Sidi Bouzid. MOKHTAR KAHOULI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

THAILAND

Junta silences monarchy's critics

Since last year's military coup, Thailand has seen a spate of lèse majesté prosecutions, putting people in jail for years for insulting the king.

Thailand's king Bhumibol Adulyadej. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

FACEBOOK CRIME

Thanakorn Siripaiboon was arrested and held in a secret military location for almost a week before resurfacing on Monday at a Bangkok courthouse, where he was charged with defaming the monarchy.

The 27-year-old factory worker now faces up to 37 years in prison for liking a Photoshopped picture of the king and his dog and sharing an infographic about a military corruption scandal on Facebook.

DON'T DIS THE KING

Ever since last year's military coup, prosecutions for lèse majesté — or insulting the king — have proliferated. There have been at least three incidents this week alone.

Under the interim constitution, junta leader Prayuth Chan-ocha has extraordinary powers to do whatever is necessary to prevent acts undermining national security, including detaining people for up to a week without a warrant.

JUNTA DEFENCE

Government spokesperson Col. Winthai Suvaree told Reuters that the royal insult law isn't being abused.

"We haven't used this law in a harsher manner but in this period there may have been more people who violated this law so authorities have to deal with them accordingly," Winthai said. "We need this law in Thailand in order to protect the monarchy which is the love of all Thais."

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

"The travesty of law enforcement under the junta's rule (has) reached a new low," said Sunai Phasuk of Human Rights Watch. "Thanakorn was charged with lèse majesté for ... comments that Thai authorities considered as mocking the king's dog." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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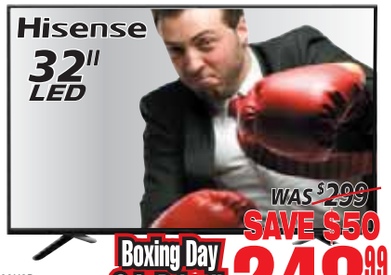

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Facebook trying a little Photo Magic on its users

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Feature aims to foster more allegiance to Messenger app

Facebook is rolling out a feature called Photo Magic that will automatically address a message so it can be sent quickly to friends identified in a picture. ISTOCK

Facebook is trying to make it easier to send photos as the holiday season's picture-taking frenzy escalates.

The world's largest social-networking service is offering a feature called Photo Magic that will automatically address a message so it can be sent quickly to Facebook friends identified in a picture.

The option relies on the same image-recognition technology that attaches people's names to Facebook posts.

Facebook Inc. will highlight Photo Magic in a Messenger update that started rolling out Thursday to users of Apple's iPhones and smartphones running on Google's Android software.

The update is being distributed to a broad audience after a month of testing among smartphone users in Australia. Facebook is planning to make Photo Magic available to Messenger users everywhere in the world, except in Canada and the European Union.

Messenger has more than 700 million users, about half the size of the audience on Facebook's social network.

Facebook is counting on Photo Magic to foster more allegiance to its Messenger app as it competes against other competing services such as Snapchat that have become particularly popular among teenagers and young adults.

As part of the Messenger upgrade, Facebook is also including an option that will allow users to change the colours of their exchanges with different friends and switch the formal name of a recipient to a nickname, such as "mom" or "dad."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CRIME

Turing CEO arrested

Martin Shkreli is escorted by law enforcement agents in New York Thursday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Martin Shkreli, the former hedge-fund manager vilified for buying Turing Pharmaceuticals and jacking up the price of a life-saving drug more than 50-fold, was arrested Thursday on securities fraud charges unrelated to the furor.

The charges against the 32-year-old entrepreneur — an unapologetically aggressive businessman and relentlessly self-promoting figure — involve his actions at another pharmaceutical company, Retrophin, which he ran as CEO from 2012 to 2014.

The indictment said Shkreli and others orchestrated three interrelated fraud schemes from 2009 to 2014. It said they fraudulently induced investors to sink their money into two separate funds and misappropriated Retrophin's assets to satisfy Shkreli's personal and professional debts.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Shaw explains takeover

Shaw Communications says its proposed $1.6-billion takeover of Wind Mobile will provide an affordable entry into the industry and an expansion beyond Western Canada where the cable and internet company has its customer base.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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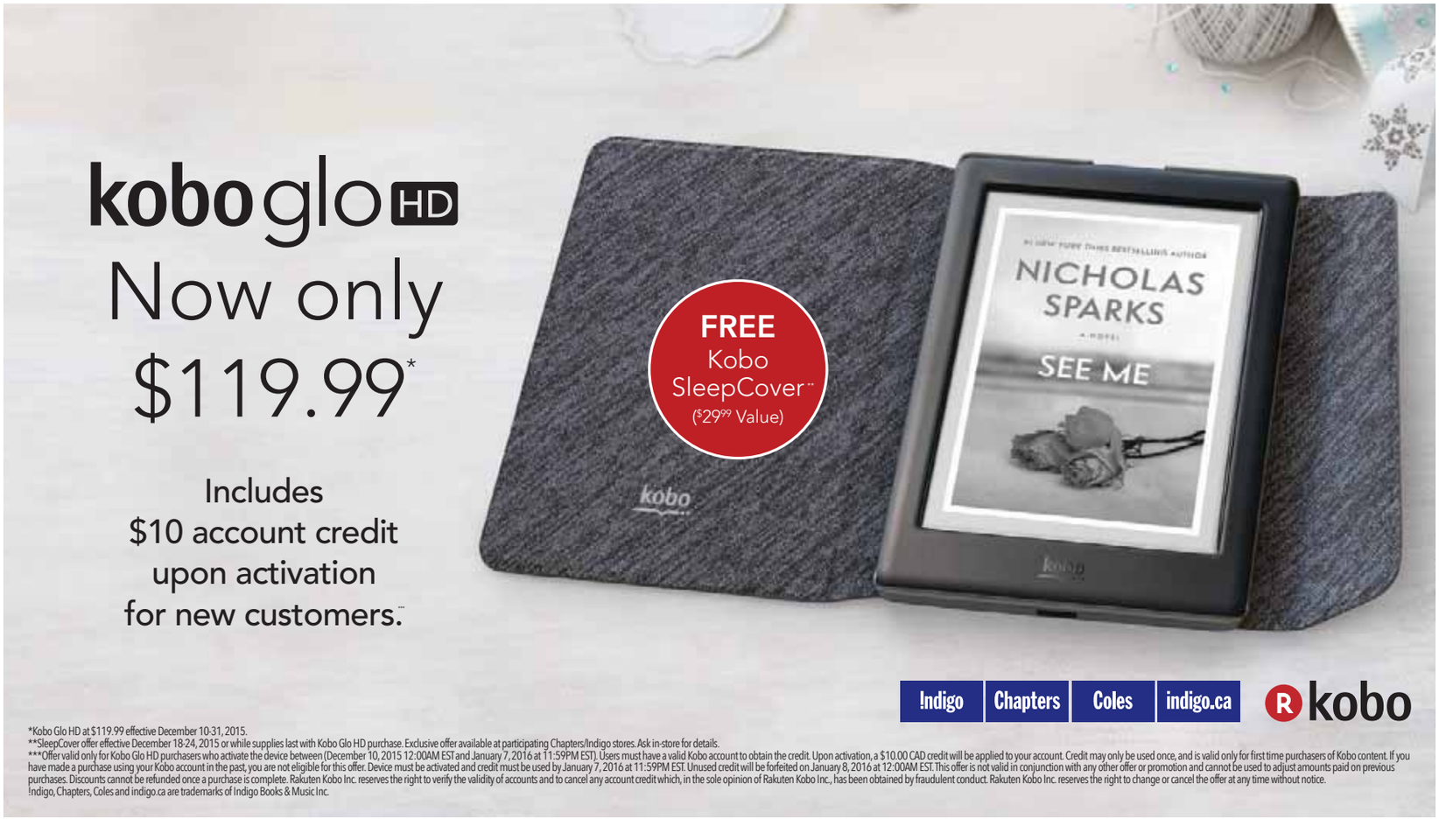

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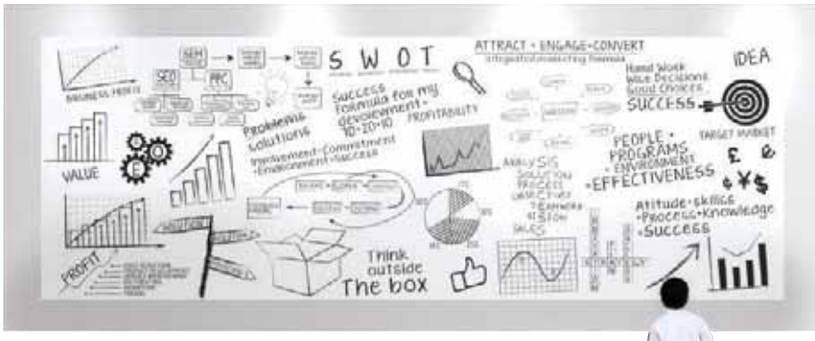
metro VIEWS
Your essential daily news
Weekend, December 18-20, 2015

THE BIG THING: GUFF

Baloney. Crapola. Baffling B.S. Or, as the Brits say, guff. Whatever you call it, overinflated, nonsensical language is an epidemic in the business world (and everywhere). Lucy Kellaway, the founder of Guffipedia, a new site that names and shames the ghastliest guffers, says the proliferation of goofy jargon is a "tragedy with no remedy." What do you think? Is guff a verbal scourge, or does it have its uses — other than being a convenient way to fill empty air?

SOURCE: THE FINANCIAL TIMES



1 Awful or awesome? Some of Guffipedia's stars include Speedo, for rebranding its swimming cap as a "hair management system," advertising firm Circus Street, which boasts that its brands become "multi-dimensional communication scaffolds," and an unnamed food-industry analyst who calls bottled water an "affordable, portable lifestyle beverage."

2 When guff works So why do people continue to appreciate (and repeat) utter nonsense? "It makes you sound clever; it shows you belong to a club; it is an alternative to thinking, and ... you can say things that sound decent but are actually meaningless," Kellaway says.

3 Dazzled by drivel In a study published last month, psychologists at the University of Waterloo presented subjects randomly with computer-generated sentences like "Wholeness quiets infinite phenomena," real tweets from spirituality guru Deepak Chopra (example: "Attention and intention are the mechanics of manifestation") and common sayings ("A river cuts through a rock, not because of its power but its persistence"). Many people found all three types of statements profound. Believers in the paranormal were more likely to say the fake and New-Age phrases were really deep.

Home at the haunted house for the holidays

Stephen Thomas
For Metro

The holidays are coming up, and, if you're like a lot of people, you'll be heading home for a few days to spend time with the fam. And by home, I mean not your home, but the house where your parents live.

Going home and hanging out with your family can be hard for a lot of people. Triple-brewed tensions that have been soaking in a familial collective unconscious for decades, divisive voting allegiances, racism, shame at confronting the shortcomings you only really feel in contrast to high-achieving siblings — the list goes on.

As your parents age, a procession of hellspawn rush in to fill the dark spaces in the home.

But going home is especially hard when your parents' house is haunted.

Like mine. That's right, my parents got themselves a big old haunted house.

Haunted by what, you ask?

Ghosts, of course. Ghosts of vicious arguments, traumatic memories and just your standard-issue childhood. How do you know if you're visiting a haunted house, you ask?

Let me tell you a story.

I went home for Christmas last year, and I was hanging my coat up in the closet when a hand came out and took my coat from my hands, hung it neatly on the rack, and hissed, quite politely, "You will never live up to your father's expectations."

The strange thing is, when I was a kid, I didn't even notice that my parents' house was haunted. Although maybe the house had fewer ghosts then. You know, there are things you don't notice about your family when you're a kid because your home is like water to a fish: It's all you know. It's only when you start to see what other families are like that you twig that not all houses' hallways emit deep, echoey whispers of "GET OUUUUUT."

Or maybe that just wasn't there when I was a kid. It does make a certain kind of sense that as your parents age, and you age, and once-vital arguments congeal into silence, a procession of hellspawn would rush in to fill the dark spaces of the home where your little soul was nurtured, undeterred by kind words, or lovers, or therapy — nay, growing stronger and feeding on the food only of itself, like a human centipede that ... grows.

Anyway, how to get rid of these ghosts? There is only one way. That's right: exorcism.

There's a little-known law of the Swiss psychotherapist Carl Jung that says every time you marshal your bravery and broach a Terrifying Topic with your parents, or other family member, in the Haunted Location, the ghost who haunts that location withers and dies. So: Do that.

"But I don't have ghosts in my home!" you say. Don't you? Listen carefully to the silence in the kitchen when everyone else has gone to sleep, and the dinner's dishes, now dry, rest in the dish rack, and two stained glasses of wine stand on the dining room table.

Listen to the hush.

Happy holidays!

Stephen Thomas lives and writes in Toronto. Follow him on Twitter @skwthomas.

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD

metroview

You don't have a right to a free online comment section

Commenters on the Globe and Mail's website are (predictably) dismayed.

The Toronto Star announced the end to its online comment sections on Wednesday, and when the Globe reported the move, its own readers — more than 400 of them — mourned the loss.

One wrote a six-point defence of comment sections as avenues for free expression. Some argued the "ultra-left downtown elites" couldn't handle the heat. Many called it short-sighted and said they've no interest in commenting on social media. They like their anonymity and even promised to drop their subscriptions if the Globe followed suit.

But the Star is not out on a limb. Dozens of media outlets around the world, including Postmedia in September, have made the same call. Why? Because comments are rife with abuse and threats, racism, sexism and bigotry (for which the publishers are legally responsible). No one, not even the Globe commenters, denies it. Cleaning up that mess takes resources, and media companies are rather tight on resources these days.

Some outlets, the New York Times being the most prominent, argue comments sections should be thought of not as an added bonus for readers but as the meat of engagement. Lose engagement and you lose readers. Lose readers and you lose money.

It's perhaps easier for the Grey Lady to downplay moderating costs; It has the advantage of being part of a new digital project to analyze and develop tools for reader comments.

But supposing comments sections really are integral to the exercise of online journalism, readers should be willing to pay. Maybe that means an extra fee in order to comment. Maybe it means watching an ad or just paying more overall for the news.

Readers should know digital and print subscriptions do not cover the cost of journalism, let alone endangered investigative journalism, let alone comment monitors. Ad dollars are only going in one direction, and while companies flail about for the best way to build readership and new revenue, some functions will get cut.

Free speech is important but it's not a newspaper's job to give it you. Media companies aren't public property. And your anonymity as a commenter is not a right.

So, yes, it would be great to have lively, spirited, hate-free debate in comments. Reporters would love to find story ideas there, along with new angles and meaningful critiques and media executives wouldn't scoff at 400-plus comments on a single piece.

But if you want it, it should cost you.

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metro WEEKEND
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MOVIES MUSIC TELEVISION DIGITAL

Despite playing one of the most recognizable characters of all time, Anthony Daniels, inset, almost never gets recognized. HANDOUT

The voice of 'We're doomed!'

ANTHONY DANIELS

Playing C-3PO comes with its share of strange moments

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

Having one of the most recognizable voices in movie history can lead to some surreal moments. Just ask Anthony Daniels. He's played C-3PO in all seven Star Wars films, including this weekend's Star Wars: The Force Awakens and once rented a car with a very familiar voice on the GPS.

"I felt uncomfortable with me — very clearly — giving me instruction for something I didn't know. I found it quite bizarre. I was driving thinking, 'This is unnatural.'"

Other times the voice, which in real life is less mannered than his on-screen counterpart, brings him unexpected recognition.

For some of his fans, seeing isn't believing — hearing is.

"One of the most charming things that happens to me is when an adult will bring a child to me and say, 'He doesn't believe you're C-3PO.'

"And why would he? I'm some old guy with white hair. Then I do the voice. You see the sound go in one ear and then there is an absolutely realistic time delay whilst the synapses process this. Nothing happens for a second-and-a-half, then suddenly there's a smile and excitement. I love that delay while they process it. You couldn't buy that. I've been given that and it gives me utter joy because it is without guile. It is just an honest recognition of something I did."

A week before Daniels trekked to Tunisia in 1976 to begin shooting the sci-fi space opera, he was a stage actor performing in Tom Stoppard's absurdist play Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead.

"It's about two nobodies," he says. "Rosencrantz is a bit gung ho, (he) doesn't think. Doesn't work things out really; just goes for the main thing. His friend Guildenstern is much more reserved, much more intellectual. He thinks about things. Worries about things.

"There I am a week later playing C-3PO in the desert with R2D2. I would say it was three or four years later that something in my brain went, 'Wait a minute, R2 and 3PO are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.' There is a nice synergy there, or connection I think. 3PO is the clever one and R2 is the gung ho one. They're odd couple buddies. It is a great dynamic to act off."

Today C-3PO and R2D2 are seen as a classic combo, but during filming, Daniels had his doubts it would work.

"The problem for me was R2D2 never made any sounds so I was playing off myself. Not to aggrandize myself, but it was quite a challenge. It was a bit like a terrible Whose Line Is It Anyway? where you pretend a chair is your best friend.

> **"The problem for me was R2D2 never made any sounds so I was playing off myself.**
> Anthony Daniels

"When I saw the final movie and there were R2's beeps and responses, to me it was total magic because that was the first time I ever saw it. They had woven a conversation after the fact."

Playing the golden droid has been a lifelong career for Daniels. The 69-year-old actor was just 30 years old when he first donned C-3PO's suit and has since appeared in person or voice in dozens of movies, television shows, commercials, PSAs and live events as the character. He's even in the legendary The Star Wars Holiday Special and says he's been "very lucky to be given the chance" to play C-3PO but calls that his "business life."

"I don't go around saying, 'Do you know who I am?'

When I suggest he could at least use his fame and the C-3PO voice to get great tables in restaurants he says, "No, no, no. Then they'd say there's no table tonight or tomorrow. I don't think people would be too terribly impressed to have me in the restaurant. Were I to enter in a gold suit then I could have the entire room to myself!"

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TV BRIEF

Khloe Kardashian to help brokenhearted sculpt new bodies in TV series

Khloe Kardashian is behind a new makeover series at the E! network, where she promises to help the brokenhearted get the "ultimate payback."

E! said Wednesday it had approved a six-episode series where one of the network's favourite sisters will be mentor people trying to turn their life around.

She calls the series Revenge Body with Khloe Kardashian. Looking great, she says, is always the best revenge for getting back at an ex.

The network did not say when the show will be on the air. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

THE TV DINNER JESSICA ALLEN

My brother and I will be watching The Force Awakens wondering why no manufacturer ever released Aunt Beru's Blue Milk

Food doesn't factor large in that galaxy, far, far away. There's the scene on Tatooine where Luke drinks blue milk in his uncle and aunt's kitchen. There's the scene in the Mos Eisley cantina — a wretched hive of scum and villainy — where glowing cocktails are consumed. And there's the scene on Dagobah where Yoda breaks into Luke's kit rations and then Yoda cooks Luke a potent gruel in his hut.

Maybe that's because food is small potatoes compared to the sustenance of the Force. But that didn't stop my older brother from fashioning pieces of white, crustless Wonder bread into "space pellets."

Star Wars was the first movie that he ever saw in a cinema. It was the summer of 1977. My dad took him. He was 5. George Lucas' mythology and his characters, who lived long ago in those perfectly patinated worlds, made an impression on him that is still strong today.

By 1980, I was old enough to join in, much to my brother's inconvenience, to see The Empire Strikes Back, and Return of the Jedi, too, three years later. I remember the Star Wars bed sheets and matching drapes; pushing his patience while he watched his VHS copies of the trilogy while I played Barbies and recited the sacred script before the characters did; and choreographing scenes in the backyard where I insisted on being Han Solo because he had the best lines.

THE MOVIE: Star Wars series

THE MEMORY: Jessica and her brother

I remember taking photos of each other posing like Jedi Knights with our Polaroid cameras and then rotoscoping the lightsabers with magic markers; and saying, "May the Force be with you" in lieu of "Good night" after our parents tucked us in.

But here's the thing: his experience, ours, is not singular. Multiply it by many, many millions. This is why I can't wait to see the box office numbers this weekend after Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens opens on Dec. 18. The film's teasers and trailers have been viewed over 400 million times. I'm not sure there's ever been anything like it.

Much of the anticipation stems from our collective reverence for the material and fondness for its messages. Some people suggest that if you watch the original trilogy now, as an adult, you'll notice that Lucas didn't depart all that much in the three later prequels. It's just that his fan base had grown up and finally noticed how hokey his dialogue was.

I don't know about that. But I do know that our only hope is The Force Awakens' director J.J. Abrams, not to mention screenwriter Lawrence Kasdan, who penned both Empire and Jedi.

My brother bought our tickets — for me, him, our partners and my dad — in October. Only recently did we discover that our mother is having cataracts removed the same day. She knew how important the movie was and didn't want to be the cause of disrupting our plan. But Simon was adamant that he skip the movie to take her to and from the operation. Let that sit for a second: while my mother has surgery, her kids will be watching a movie — wondering why no manufacturer ever released Aunt Beru's Blue Milk — and a non-blood relation will tend to her.

"What is wrong with us?" My brother recently asked me.

"I have no idea," I said. As for Simon? The Force is strong with that one.

Jessica Allen is the digital correspondent on CTV's The Social.

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CURMUDGEONLY CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Not everyone loves the holidays — in fact, some people dread them. Take this quiz to see if you're a Christmas curmudgeon:

1. It's Nov. 1, the day after Halloween, and you walk into a store and hear Christmas music blaring. What do you do?

a. Buy the store, shut it down
b. Swear at the top of your lungs
c. Go on a rampage

2. A loved one asks for a gift that's outrageously expensive. What's your game plan?

a. Flat out no
b. Steal it
c. Buy it, then tear it to shreds

3. You've been tasked with bringing a side dish for Christmas dinner. What do you bring?

a. Something you picked up at a convenience store on the way to the party — which you're late to
b. Booze
c. Water

4. You pass by a Santa look-alike on the street, collecting money for a local charity. What's your reaction?

a. "Leave. Me. Alone!"
b. "Make me a sandwich."
c. "Water... gun."

5. It's Christmas morning. What's your first thought when you open your eyes?

a. Bah humbug
b. @#&$!
c. Bright light! Bright light!

Mostly a: You're Scrooged — You're selfish and cynical, but you may learn some lessons this Christmas that will turn your frown upside down.
Mostly b: You're a Bad Santa — You've been misbehaving (a lot), but this might be the Christmas you go good.
Mostly c: You're a Gremlin — You'd better not eat any Christmas cookies after midnight.

Whether you're a curmudgeon or not, there's a Christmas movie for you. Starting Dec. 8 and running until Jan. 12, Hollywood Suite is offering a free preview of uncut and commercial-free movies that shaped the '70s, '80s, '90s and 2000s. Available on television service providers across the country, this free preview includes access to Hollywood Suite On Demand, where available. Rediscover such Christmas classics as Gremlins (1984), Scrooged (1988), Bad Santa (2003) and more.

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STAR METRO Content Solutions

Watch the darker side of holiday movies

ROUNDUP

Black Christmas isn't the only film to trade tinsel for terror

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

Without Black Christmas, a groundbreaking 1974 Canadian horror film there might never have been a Jason Voorhees, Freddy Krueger or Michael Myers. These characters owe much to one film made in Toronto, a movie Film Threat magazine calls "the first modern slasher movie."

The film enters its fourth decade this year, a milestone celebrated with the release of Black Christmas, the Season's Grievings Edition in late November. The story of a sorority house terrorized by a murderous stranger has been given the deluxe Blu-ray treatment, packed with a Santa's sleigh of new features. It is one of the great Christmas horror movies, but it isn't the only one.

Here's a look at holiday films without an ounce of tinsel treacle.

Silent Night, Deadly Night

Originally called Slayride, this movie about a teen who goes on a murderous rampage dressed as Santa after his parents are killed, changed its name for release. In its first weekend it out-grossed Nightmare on Elm Street, but then parents angry at Santa's portrayal as an axe murderer picketed theatres, and the box office dried up.

The Nightmare Before Christmas

Imagine if our collective image of Santa Claus had been shaped by Allegory of Gluttony and Lust painter Hieronymus Bosch instead of some nameless commercial artist at Coca-Cola and you'll get an idea of the dark edge of Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas. The jolly fat man in the red suit is gone, hijacked by a skeleton in a pinstriped suit. The story of the mayor of Halloweentown who kidnaps and impersonates 'Sandy Claws' to bring his own brand of good will to the world is a Disney release but it is one of the rare ones that isn't meant for the entire family.

Santa Claus

K. Gordon Murray was a film producer best known for snapping up the rights to foreign films, dubbing them into English for American audiences. His best-known pick-up was Santa Claus, a strange Yuletide flick about St. Nick and Merlin doing battle with Lucifer.

Originally produced in Spanish and featuring a Santa Claus who doesn't live at the North Pole, but above it, in a magic castle in outer space, it isn't exactly scary, but may be the weirdest movie on this list.

Elves

When most people think of Dan Haggerty visions of the gruff but kind-hearted mountain man from the 1970s TV show The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams come to mind. B-movie fans, however, remember him as Mike McGavin, a down-on-his-luck department store Santa who does battle with a bloodthirsty Nazi elf in Elves. It suffers from cheesy dialogue —"I had a rough day at work... Santa got murdered"— and the fact that a movie called Elves features only one elf, but it's so ho-ho-ho-horrible it's fun to watch.

The 1974 Canadian made Black Christmas has been touted as the first modern slasher movie. CONTRIBUTED

Silent Night, Zombie Night

Walking Dead fans might get a charge out of Silent Night, Zombie Night, a Christmas viral outbreak movie so realistic a concerned citizen called the police during filming, citing gang violence. The LAPD showed up by foot, car and air only to find movie zombies battling with prop weapons.

Christmas Evil

Christmas Evil is the best of the Santa as serial killer movies and before you ask, there are quite a few of them. In this one a boy is traumatized after walking in on his parents in flagrante with dad dressed as Santa. He develops daddy issues and a Santa fixation and one Christmas Eve brings murder home for the holidays.

The Nightmare Before Christmas. CONTRIBUTED

Now playing

DRAMA/COMEDY

Sisters

Director: Jason Moore
Starring: Tina Fey, Amy Poehler

Two disconnected sisters are summoned home to clean out their childhood bedroom before their parents sell the family house. Looking to recapture their glory days, they throw one final high-school-style party for their classmates,

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: 89% Audience: + 96%

ART HOUSE

The Lady in the Car with the Glasses and a Gun

Director: Joann Sfar
Starring: Freya Mavor

A beautiful secretary steals her boss' sports car to go joyriding in this stylish psychological thriller. She goes to visit a seaside town but suddenly is the lead suspect in a murder.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: NOT YET REVIEWED Audience: + 71%

ANIMATION/KIDS

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Road Chip

Director: Walt Becker
Starring: Justin Long, Matthew Gray Gubler

Through a series of misunderstandings, Alvin, Simon and Theodore come to believe that Dave is going to propose to his new girlfriend in New York City... and dump them.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: 8% Audience: + 82%

DOCUMENTARY

Noma: My Perfect Storm

Director: Pierre Deschamps
Starring: Hanne Redzepi

A creative journey into the unique mind of René Redzepi. How did Redzepi manage to revolutionize the entire world of gastronomy, inventing the alphabet and vocabulary that would infuse newfound pedigree to Nordic cuisine?

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: NOT YET REVIEWED Audience: + 70%

ACTION & ADVENTURE

Star Wars: The Force Awakens

Director: J.J. Abrams
Starring: Harrison Ford, Daisy Ridley

In this continuation of the Star Wars saga, balance returns to the Force as the First Order, emerging from the ashes of the Empire, clashes with the Resistance, which includes newcomers and heroes from the former Rebel Alliance.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: 94% Audience: + 99%

MYSTERY/SUSPENSE

Extraction

Director: Steven C. Miller
Starring: Bruce Willis, Gina Carano, Kellan Lutz

When a terrorist group kidnaps retired CIA field operative Leonard Turner, his son Harry Turner, a government analyst who has been repeatedly turned down for field service, launches his own unsanctioned rescue operation.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: NOT YET REVIEWED Audience: + 81%

DOCUMENTARY

Film looks inside the best restaurant in the world

Steve Gow
For Metro Canada

The taste of success

The documentary Noma: My Perfect Storm, about the famous Copenhagen restaurant, is out on VOD today. CONTRIBUTED

Noma: My Perfect Storm may capture 33-months in the kitchen of Rene Redzepi's four-time winning Best Restaurant in the World, but Pierre Deschamps actually never set out to make a movie about food.

"The first goal was to focus on Redzepi," admitted the filmmaker ahead of the documentary's release in select theatres and on VOD.

"The backdrop is Noma. I didn't want to go too much into the making of the food itself because we have TV shows and they do that all the time. I was really trying to tell the story of a person in a specific context and what that person achieved."

Redzepi's accomplishments are certainly worth attention. The young Danish chef has not only run world-renowned Noma, a restaurant in Copenhagen, he also invented New Nordic Cuisine — an artistic, locally-based gastronomy that relies heavily on seasonal ingredients and foraging. Perhaps more importantly, Deschamps explores how an ostracized Muslim youth battled racism and still seemingly suffers the insecurity of being an outsider — even as he runs the Best Restaurant in the World.

"I knew he has issues with racism (and) I knew with Noma, he was trying to do something different. The sum of those factors made him who he became," said Deschamps. "When you look at Redzepi's story, it's a guy who climbed the ladder of success within a few years to become the God of Food — people will be surprised looking at the ups and downs."

Moviegoers will also see behind the curtain of one of the most celebrated kitchens on the planet. There may be scenes of Redzepi rejoicing his apprentices' gastronomic experimentations, but they're equally balanced by brazen sequences of the famous chef emotional and unhinged.

"He knows me a bit — who I am and my philosophy about life. And he knows I wasn't going to dig into private stuff," admitted Deschamps about capturing such intimate moments on-screen. But the filmmaker is also quick to credit Danish culture's broad respect for "tall poppy syndrome" for Redzepi's modesty as well.

> **It's a guy who climbed the ladder of success within a few years to become the God of Food**
>
> Pierre Deschamps on Rene Redzepi

"You need to make sure you respect everyone and you shouldn't think of yourself too much," explained Deschamps. "I think Rene has kept that sort of humility."

MORE EATS

Top three restaurants in Canada:

Toque! – Montreal
This fun Montreal restaurant has focused on local ingredients for an inventive menu made of gastronomic delights like pan-seared foie gras and venison loin.

Hawksworth Restaurant – Vancouver
With its elegant interior, the décor of Hawksworth is as swanky as its French and West Coast-influenced cuisine, which ranges from entrees like parmesan-crusted chicken to grilled sturgeon with squid ink risotto.

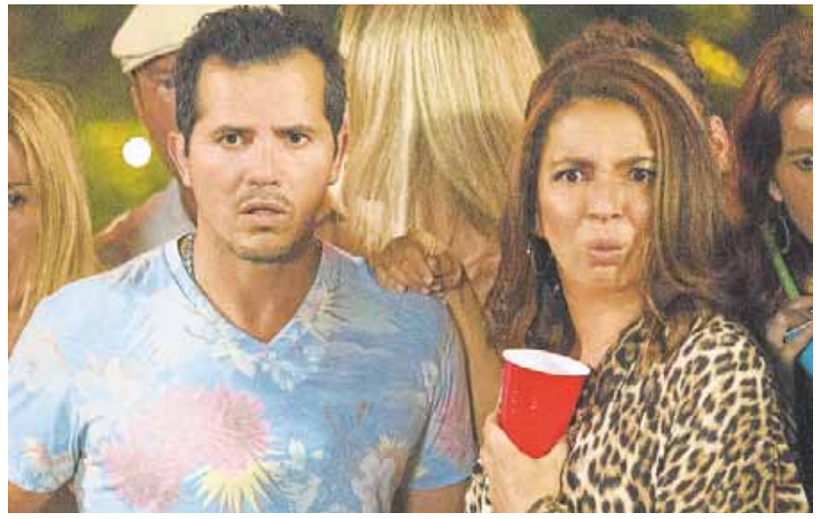
Buca – Toronto
An Italian spin on fine-dining, executive chef Rob Gentile serves up such fare as hand-rolled ricotta gnocchi or crispy pigs' ears with fennel. Even famed chef Jamie Oliver once tweeted his "favourite meal of the year" was at this upscale alleyway eatery.

Maya Rudolf is anti-social(media)

Q&A

The SNL vet on Sisters and steering clear of social media

Ned Ehrbar
Metro | Hollywood



This photo shows John Leguizamo as Dave and Maya Rudolph as Brinda, in a scene from the film, Sisters, directed by Jason Moore. K.C. BAILEY/UNIVERSAL PICTURES VIA AP

When SNL vet Maya Rudolph isn't busy being hilarious — like in the new comedy Sisters alongside Tina Fey and Amy Poehler — she's busy raising her four children with her husband, filmmaker Paul Thomas Anderson. So it's understandable why she doesn't have time for social media. But even if she did, she'd avoid it all the same.

Your character, Brinda, has a major chip on her shoulder from high school. How was it playing that kind of long-held resentment?
It is fun. I think the insecurity of Brinda's character really is our own collective insecurity. Everybody wants to be invited to the party. That's sort of the worst possible feeling in terms of high school days. You don't want to be the person that's left off the list. I feel like with Brinda it's almost as if she was just waiting for Kate (played by Fey) to come back to her hometown so she could be like, "See? I've really got my life together."

It's interesting how that FOMO (fear of missing out) turned her into a mean girl.
She has major FOMO. I just learned about FOMO. But everyone's got FOMO. Well, not everyone. Some people don't. Some people are actually content.

Twitter and Facebook have made it more pronounced.
Yes. I don't dabble in those things. Maybe I was just born so early in the '70s that it's just so hard for me to relate to the idea of sharing everything. When I do see other people's Instagrams or Twitter, it's such a carefully edited version of themselves, so everything looks f—ing great. Everything is perfect. Your life is perfect. But also I don't want anybody to know my business.

And it's a lot of work.
I feel like if I was constantly doing that and not doing the other things I need to do, I would hate myself a little bit. I don't have enough time to do the things I'm supposed to be doing, so it would just feel like pure procrastination.

Has anyone ever pressured you to do it for work?
Yes. When I did my variety show, I was given a Twitter account... And so I announced it, like, "Hey! My show's coming on. You should watch it." And the response was so crazy. I obviously had not set up my settings correctly, but people started responding and my phone would not stop. It felt weird.

That sounds terrifying.
It was. And I'm not used to it. I'm not good at it. I'm good at other things.

Such as?
Roller skating. But not ice skating. And I do not know how to rollerblade either.

How does this compare to crazy parties you've been to?
This is the craziest party. I mean, I did go to a lot of parties in high school. I grew up in L.A., and the thing to do was just go to random parties. You'd just go to somebody's house. It was so stupid, everything about it was dumb. The concept of it is just so screwed up. "Hey, there's a bunch of children in a home and the adults are gone and everyone's wasted!" That's a very, very dangerous, bad idea.

Do you think that new perspective has to do with being a grown-up and a parent?
That's the worst payback ever... having to think about that stuff. I don't have tattoos, but there was a time when I wanted one. And then my daughter, her cousin drew these dots on her face and I was like, "If you're going to get a tattoo you need to talk to me first." What's happening to me? (laughs)

ET THEIR STUFFED.

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The Shortest Day calls all the shorts

FREE FILM SERIES

Canadian films join in a global celebration of short movies

Shorter attention spans are spawning memorable movies.

That's how award-winning Toronto filmmaker and animator Sol Friedman sees it. His eight-minute film Bacon & God's Wrath, a whimsical study of a 90-year-old Jewish woman weighing her decision to have her first taste of pork, is among 28 shorts screening in various locations during the free film series called The Shortest Day.

Started in France in 2011, The Shortest Day is now in 50 countries and is called a "celebration" of shorts, rather than a film fest.

The Canadian-made movies are bundled into four free programs: Dramas and Comedies; Kids; Family and Musical. They screen Friday to Monday at more than 80 venues across Canada, from shopping malls to theatres, leading up to Tuesday's Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year. Go to theshortestday.ca for a list of programs, films and locations.

"This art form, which has always been on the periphery . . . is certainly having its moment," said Friedman, 33. He blends action and animation in Bacon & God's Wrath, along with a real pig's head that has a "conversation" with Razie Brownstone about her musings on religion, family and why, with the help of some research on "the Google," she's ready to eat bacon.

Bacon & God's Wrath is also having its moment. After screening at TIFF, it will be part of the Sundance Film Festival's shorts program in January and was recently named one of Canada's Top 10 short films for 2015. It will screen with the other shorts at the TIFF Bell Lightbox on Jan. 13 at 7 p.m.

Friedman said he wanted to make a short on the subject and needed somebody willing to "break this taboo." He found it in Brownstone, a family friend.

It's an exciting time to be a filmmaker, he said, a bit like the Wild West. "With the tools being what they are, there's no excuse not to make a film if you're so inclined."

The shorts in the showcase are made using live action, stop-motion and animation techniques, and include Torill Kove's Oscar-nominated Me and My Moulton, Cordell Barker's If I Was God and Tamara Segura's experimental short about music and memory, Song for Cuba.

Films from Toronto filmmakers include Call It Blue, directed by Ryerson University's Julia Hendrickson, winner of Best Student Short at the Kerry (Ireland) Film Festival, and Amir Honarmand's Be the Snow, about a pillow that runs away from home to explore the world.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

SCREENING
Some of the films screening for The Shortest Day from top: Be the Snow, Call It Blue, Song for Cuba, and Bacon & God's Wrath.

Q&A WITH ACTOR SARAH GADON

Inspired by long-vs.-short filmmaking, we set a challenge for Sarah Gadon, ambassador for The Shortest Day film celebration: give five-word answers to our long questions.

You have appeared in shorts and you made your directing debut with an episode of the Movie Network documentary series Reelside, which could indeed be considered a short. Why do you think shorts are a good method for you to explore your creativity as an actress and filmmaker?
Shorts = less money to make.

There are 28 shorts organized into four thematic programs. As someone who has worked so extensively with David Cronenberg (Maps to the Stars, Cosmopolis, A Dangerous Method), what would you call a program that was made up of Cronenberg shorts?
Indigestion: Brief Encounters With Pain (18A)

As The Shortest Day's 2015 English-language ambassador, do you see an ambassadorial role elsewhere for yourself now that you have the experience — perhaps in the diplomatic service, working at an embassy or the United Nations, or as the Canadian ambassador to a country of your choosing?
Yes. Global film ambassador, please.

If there was an opportunity for a filmmaker to collaborate with you on a film project that could eventually become a short film about you and your life, perhaps your day-to-day existence and how you spend your free time away from the cameras, what would this short be titled?
Codependence: A Small Canadian & Caffeine (PG).

Idris Elba acknowledges that too much attention on his looks could taint him as just another pretty face. CONTRIBUTED

Luther is Elba's most natural role

INTERVIEW

Actor says there's plenty of parallels with detective

Idris Elba has many reasons for why he keeps coming back to Luther. "It's unfinished business, it's fertile ground," he explains. "The character continues to challenge me."

Detective Chief Inspector John Luther also challenges his fans, who are sure to greet him warmly for this, his fourth run, in the two-hour special airing at 9 p.m. E.T. Thursday on BBC America.

As usual, Luther finds its hero possessed by a grisly murder case: a serial killer with a cannibalistic bent.

Meanwhile, he remains haunted by Alice Morgan, the tantalizing sociopath from Season 1 who escaped arrest by Luther but became his twisted confidante. Conspicuously missing, her whereabouts unclear, she remains very much on Luther's mind and a key part of this tale.

Elba calls the demons-beset Luther "one of the closest characters in terms of who I am." It's a surprising claim, since, during this recent interview, he seems light-hearted in stylish casual wear, a marked contrast to the glum expression and no-nonsense suit Luther wears. "I don't feel like I have to throw on too much of a character to play John Luther," says Elba, attempting to explain himself. "We shoot in the area I grew up in (East London), and I really let the writer take me on the journey. It's the most naturalistic I can be in a role."

Even Luther's distinctive walk — a slouching swagger, hands jammed in his pockets, pushing forward with staunch intent — is comfortably derived from Elba's own gait: "I tore my left Achilles, which make my left leg sort of limp — or swag!"

A strapping, towering presence with leading-man looks, Elba nonetheless has been able to transform himself profoundly for his roles, such as the brutal leader of an African rebel army in his recent film Beasts of No Nation, as Nelson Mandela in Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom and as Stringer Bell, the strictly business Baltimore drug lord, in the HBO series The Wire.

No matter what his role, Elba is easy on the eyes. Asked if he gets weary of his extreme handsomeness being the focus of media and fans alike, he adopts an almost sheepish expression while handing credit to the camera. "Because I'm an actor, I've got that 'beauty light' on me," he insists. "In real life, it's not like that all the time. Some people go, 'He's nice, but he's not my sort of thing.'"

Acknowledging that too much attention to his looks could taint him as just another pretty face, he does allow that "it's a compliment and it's great, man. I could be described as 'aggressive,' or 'strong.' But 'sexy' works, too." And he laughs heartily.

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5 CLASSIC TV HOLIDAY SPECIALS

Brian Gasparek
For Metro Canada

If you haven't had a chance to kick back with a glass of spiked eggnog and stream Bill Murray's holiday Netflix special, A Very Murray Christmas, you're totally missing out.

The show is not only as captivatingly bonkers as you would expect, it also pays a great homage to all of the classic Christmas variety specials from television's past. Especially the really weird ones.

Dating back to the late '50s, celebrity-hosted Christmas specials were a huge draw on TV every winter. They featured singing, dancing, lovable guest stars, and some questionably thin holiday-themed plotlines.

The popularity of these specials lasted several decades, and a handful of them still remain notorious today.

Whether it's because of their festive nostalgia, their utter ridiculousness or their disastrous legacy, here are 5 classic Christmas TV specials that you need to go back and watch.

1 The Star Wars Holiday Special

All of the hype surrounding The Force Awakens this month reminded us of the most ridiculous, must-see Christmas special of all time, The Star Wars Holiday Special from 1978. Yes, this actually exists and it's beyond weird. Although this special is more plot-driven than the others we mentioned, it's still intended to be a wholesome family variety show, and features singing, comedy and celebrity guests. The special revolves around a disgruntled-looking Star Wars cast attempting to get Chewbacca home to his family in time to celebrate 'Life Day.' Bea Arthur, Art Carney, Jefferson Starship and other guest stars all make very confusing appearances in what was a blatant Star Wars cash-grab. It's so much of a mess that even George Lucas says he hates it! Look it up on YouTube.

2 The Judy Garland Christmas Show

In the early '60s, The Judy Garland Christmas Show aired as a sweet, wholesome variety special that was fit for the entire family. But if you watch it now, it will completely floor you. The special, which took place just a few years before Garland died from a barbiturate overdose, was entirely sponsored by a pharmaceutical company! It features a visibly troubled-looking Garland, hosting a Christmas celebration with her children and guests at their faux home. It includes a plethora of uncomfortable moments, like the suggestive duet performed by Garland's young daughter Liza Minnelli and her boyfriend Tracy Everitt, Everitt's bizarre crotch-accentuating sweater and a couple different Santa visits that feel more like home invasions. The special is available on YouTube. It's crazy.

3 Andy Williams and the NBC Kids Search for Santa

Speaking of baffling, the premise of Moon River singer Andy Williams' 1985 Christmas special was so unbelievably offside, it would never air today. The show features a 58-year-old Williams convincing several child actors from popular NBC sitcoms like The Cosby Show and Punky Brewster to run away with him. He takes the kids to Finland, where they proceed to spend time in a secluded cabin in the woods, all in an effort to track down Santa Claus. No, really. The singing and dancing displayed by the children is almost as frightening as the plotline. A young Joey Lawrence's performance is exceptionally awful. You can watch clips from the show on YouTube.

4 Mr. T and Emmanuel Lewis in a Christmas Dream

If you want to see a special so atrociously bad it's good, you need to watch Mr. T and Emmanuel Lewis' Christmas Dream from the mid-'80s. Yes, at one point in history, Emmanuel Lewis and Mr. T were big enough stars to warrant having their own primetime Christmas special. Lewis, riding high on Webster fame, plays a kid who's lost all of his holiday spirit. Mr. T plays one of Santa's lackeys who attempts to restore Lewis' festive cheer. The singing is as terrible as you can imagine, and the special's one notable guest, magician David Copperfield, comes across as a creep. It's a cheesy train wreck, but you can't look away. You can find clips of it on YouTube.

5 Pee-wee's Playhouse Christmas Special

Pee-Wee Herman's Christmas special from 1988 is an absolute must watch. The show combines the nostalgic singing and dancing from classic '60s holiday specials with the weekly weirdness that was Pee-wee's Playhouse. Along with Herman himself, the special features all of Pee-wee's bizarre Playhouse friends like Chairy, Cowboy Curtis and Charo. The strange cast interacts and performs with a solid line-up of '80s special guests that include Cher, Magic Johnson, Glen Close, Whoopi Goldberg and Oprah. The special is available on Netflix and should appeal to children, adults and stoners alike.

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Canuck cartoonist on Jughead reboot

COMICS

Writer-artist talks working with childhood favourites

As a kid in Barrie, Ont., cartoonist Steve Murray had an affinity for Archie Comics wry guy Jughead Jones, Marvel's anthropomorphic Howard the Duck and, of course, Star Wars.

Now the writer-artist is a part of those very worlds, thanks to a skyrocketing comic book career that has him so busy, he jokes: "It's not a good move."

"It's not good for my health, it's not good for my relationship, it's not good for anyone, really," Murray, who goes by the pseudonym Chip Zdarsky, said with a laugh in a recent phone interview from his Toronto home.

Indeed, the former National Post illustrator and columnist has enough projects on the go to even rattle the seemingly unflappable Jughead.

He's writing the rebooted Jughead series for Archie Comics, which launched in October, as well as a new Howard the Duck Marvel Comics book series that kicked off in March.

Meanwhile, he continues to illustrate his hit series Sex Criminals, which won a Will Eisner Comic Industry Award and has been optioned for a TV pilot by Universal Television.

And he recently drew a variant cover for issue No. 1 of Marvel's Star Wars: Vader Down comic.

The rare cover, featuring Darth Vader and Jaxxon the green rabbit, went gangbusters on the auction circuit: one copy recently sold on eBay for about $3,700 US and another sold for $4,000 during an online auction set up by Canada Cares. The latter sale will help support a Syrian refugee family's journey to Toronto.

Murray, whose other comics include Prison Funnies and Monster Cops, developed a passion for drawing as a child.

"I didn't do too well in art in high school, I think just because I always wanted to draw comics," said Murray, "so anything else I tried to turn into a comic book and the teacher would get upset with me."

While studying art at Sheridan College in Oakville, Ont., he had to do a 3-D recreation of a 2-D work of art. He built a comic frame around himself, had a speech balloon pointed at his head and impersonated Jughead.

"I recreated a panel from a Jughead comic just because of my affinity for the character," he said. "I think I got a C-plus. I don't think the teacher quite considered Jughead 'art.'"

An ironic notion now, given the fame the easygoing, burger-loving character has brought Murray on the convention circuit.

Murray said Archie Comics felt he was a good fit for Jughead because of his Chip Zdarsky online persona as well as some comical banter he had on Facebook with his hometown Applebee's restaurant that went viral last year.

"The Archie crew saw that as a very Jughead-style thing," he said, "and in my youth I kind of looked more like Jughead - but the burgers catch up to you."

In the new series, Murray has kept Jughead's smarts and asexual nature but amped up his sarcasm. "Part of the comic is teaching Jughead that there's more to the world than his narrow view of it," he said.

Murray's involvement with Howard the Duck also harkens back to his childhood.

"Howard the book I loved as a kid, so it was pretty easy to come up with ideas for the pitch," he said.

"Whenever I'd go to my uncle's house I'd go through his collection and read them all."

He said he's had fun playing with the connectivity between the characters in the Marvel Universe.

"I think in my first issue of Howard, I threw She-Hulk and Spider-Man in just to say that I've written Spider-Man and She-Hulk. And now I see Howard popping up in other people's books, my version of him, and that's also just such a thrill, because you become part of a larger thing."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

BOOKS

Edmonton-born Steve Murray, a.k.a. Chip Zdarsky, has been busy.

Murray is writing the rebooted Jughead series for Archie Comics, which launched in October, as well as a new Howard the Duck Marvel Comics book series that kicked off in March. He's also penning "a sci-fi 'Wizard of Oz' saga" for Image Comics called Kaptara, with the first issue due out Dec. 23.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

The burger-loving character gets a makeover in the new comic series written by Chip Zdarsky.
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Rap act N.W.A. gain hall of fame spot

RECOGNITION

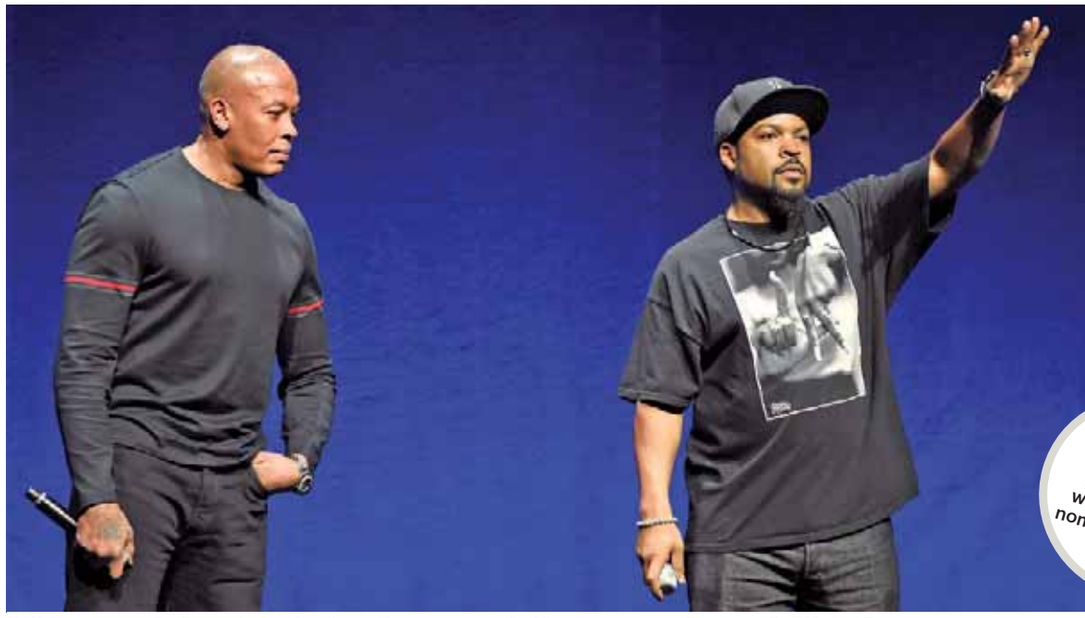
Four '70s bands also make cut as inductees

The groundbreaking Los Angeles rap act N.W.A. will join a quartet of 1970s era FM radio rockers — Chicago, Cheap Trick, Deep Purple and Steve Miller — as 2016 inductees into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

N.W.A., led by Dr. Dre and Ice Cube, was elected after three unsuccessful nominations in a year when a movie about their career, Straight Outta Compton, was a box office hit. Their hard-core tales of life on the street on songs like F--- the Police made them a provocative chart presence in the late 1980s and influenced an empire of other acts.

Both Miller and Cheap Trick made it during their first year on the ballots.

The induction ceremony for the Cleveland-based hall will be held April 8 in Brooklyn's Barclays Center. HBO will televise highlights later in the spring.



N.W.A. members Dr. Dre, left, and Ice Cube. The rap act is a 2016 inductee at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Guitarist Miller came out of the San Francisco rock scene and became a dependable maker of pop hits like Take the Money and Run, Fly Like an Eagle, Jet Airliner and Jungle Love.

Midwestern favourites Cheap Trick succeeded with a highly-amped version of Beatles-influenced melodies on hits Surrender and Dream Police. Their Live at Budokan album is one of rock's best-known live sets. Guitarist Rick Nielsen and rumpled drummer Bun E. Carlos gave them an indelible live presence.

The guitar riff for Deep Purple's Smoke on the Water remains one of the most recognizable in rock history. Guitarist Ritchie Blackmore was a stalwart in a hard rock act that competed with Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath for the loyalty of metalheads.

Before they shortened their name from the Chicago Transit Authority, Chicago was known for its jazz-rock fusion. Behind the vocals of Peter Cetera, they had a string of pop hits including Saturday in the Park, 25 or 6 to 4, If You Leave Me Now and Does Anyone Really Know What Time it Is?

More than 800 voters of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Foundation selected the inductees.

The influential disco-era band Chic is becoming the Susan Lucci of music, failing to win induction in its 10th year as a nominee.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SNUBBED Janet Jackson, The Cars, Los Lobos and Yes were among the nominees rejected this year.

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Vaughan Mills
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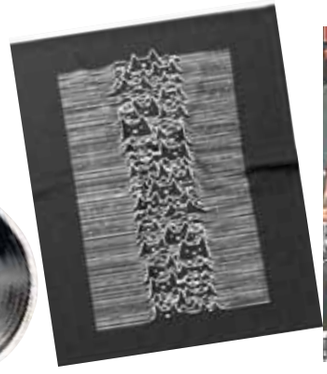
Woodbine Centre
Yorkdale Mall

6 GIFTS FOR THE MUSIC NERD ON YOUR LIST

With a week to go before Christmas, we're in the Red Zone when it comes to panic shopping. What to buy the music fan/musician who has everything? Fear not because Alan Cross is here to offer gift suggestions for all budgets. **ALAN CROSS/METRO**



1 Cufflinks

OK, so cufflinks aren't as popular as they once were, but for $13.50 US, I found a pair on Etsy that looks like tiny vinyl records.
Website: etsy.com/shop/monedus

2 Album Artwork Blanket

Society6 has a nice selection of throws depicting blown-up versions of classic albums. I'm stuck between one based on My Bloody Valentine's Loveless and another of Unknown Pleasures from Joy Division. For $49 US, you could opt for both.
Website: society6.com/throw-blankets

3 Blood-spitting KISS doll

While KISS action figures date back to the '70s, the new 2015 edition of the Gene doll comes with "BLOOD SPITTING ACTION." It can be yours for $69.99 US from Figures Toy Company.
Website: figurestoycompany.com

4 Jack White's turntable for kids

You can bestow the pleasure of vinyl on your kids with a bright yellow portable turntable from Jack White's Third Man Records. Officially called Manny's Children's Turntable, it plays albums, 45s and 78s and comes with a USB port for converting vinyl into MP3s. A steal at $89.95 US.
Website: thirdmanstore.com

5 Music-themed toilet seats

Jammin' Johns, a company that promises "music to your rear," offers a selection of toilet seats with lids shaped like an acoustic guitar, a grand piano or the backside of a Fender Strat. You can view them all in the company's Throne Room (seriously). Expect to spend at least $200 US.
Website: jamminjohns.com

6 Sennheiser Orpheus Headphones

These 'phones from Sennheiser combine vacuum tube and solid-state technology. Frequency response is 8-100,000 Hz, which reproduces sound bats can't hear. Just under $76,000. Merry Christmas, one percenter.
Website: en-de.sennheiser.com/orpheus

LAST MINUTE GIFTS AT H&M!
HAVE YOU FINISHED YOUR HOLIDAY SHOPPING?
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H&M

How to get the most at the last minute

SHOPPING

It's not too late to find great Christmas gifts

Astrid Van Den Broek

Last-minute holiday shopping can be overwhelming, so experts say it's important to remain thoughtful and find those rare times when malls aren't too crowded. ISTOCK

Of course. You waited too long to snag that Dr. Who Tardis adult onesie and now they're all sold out. Now what are you going to get your sister? And when are you going to tackle the rest of your Christmas shopping?

Not to worry — we asked these top shopping bloggers for their best tips on approaching the last-minute Christmas shop.

Stay cool

"Christmas shopping can get overwhelming, especially if you've left it late, so take a minute first to really think of creative or thoughtful gifts to give your loved ones," says Tiffany Anthonia, the blogger behind shopaholicoverhere.blogspot.com.

Plan your shopping

Write down your list of who to shop for and check it twice. "And try to shop at stores that have a variety of product categories to save time when you have an entire list to shop for," adds Anthonia. If you can, also opt for low-traffic shopping times — think during the week as soon as the mall or stores open rather than wading into after-work, rush-hour shopping.

Set your limits

"I'm a fan of the 'do it all at once' approach," says Anne Keery, the blogger behind UniqueGifter.com. "But if this is a source of stress, give yourself reasonable constraints, like 'Everything needs to come from this mall in the next three hours.' Setting boundaries for yourself can make things a lot less worrisome."

Make alternative arrangements

Your "it" item is out of stock online? "If the retailer has a brick-and-mortar location, see if the item is available in-store because most major retailers including Best Buy, Toys "R" Us and Walmart offer free in-store pickup. This way you can buy the item online, then get an email within an hour or two when it's ready to be picked up in-store," says Kyle James, founder of rather-be-shopping.com.

Get creative

Or try posting a "Wanted" ad for your must-have item on classified sites such as Craigslist and Kijiji, and also check eBay.

"Alternatively, give a card with the name of the gift and a future delivery date," says Keery.

Or use that gift idea as inspiration. "At least you know what gift direction you wanted to go, so find a gift that's either similar or complementary of that gift you had in mind," says Anthonia. "You might come across an even better gift."

FESTIVE FILMS

Finished shopping? Time for a movie

Keith Carman

Christmas films: a time when almost anything goes, so long as it features a decorated tree and some sort of life lesson.

Grabbing us in the midst of holiday cheer, virtually anything on the silver screen is bound to fly. But there are a few notables to keep in mind.

It's A Wonderful Life (1946)

George Bailey (James Stewart) wishes he never existed, a mindset changed by an angel (Henry Travers), who shows him how lives would have been impacted for the worse without him.

Scrooged (1998)

Bill Murray as a belligerent/self-obsessed TV executive thrust into a modern-day version of Dickens' A Christmas Carol.

How The Grinch Stole Christmas (2000)

This live action version of Dr. Seuss' 1957 book features everything from kitsch to comedy; introspection to wistfulness. And one heck of a makeup budget.

Love Actually (2003)

Sometimes we just need a bit of romance for the holidays.

A Christmas Story (1983)

Who can forget young Ralphie Parker and his quest for the ultimate Christmas gift: a Red Ryder Carbine Action 200-shot Range Model air rifle with a compass in the stock and "this thing which tells time?"

National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation (1989)

Chevy Chase reviving his Clark W. Griswold for a third—and probably best—instalment, National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation features a hilarious version of every situation we've encountered personally: annoying family, faulty decorations and ... kidnapping our boss? Well, maybe not the latter.

Rudolph, The Red-Nosed Reindeer (1964)

This stop-motion animated flick has become a classic unto itself, airing regularly throughout the season. Cute, heart-warming, and a must for all ages.

Krampus (2015)

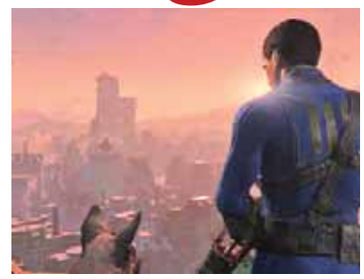
One of the few new entries to the fold this year is — of all things — a horror flick.

Light up the eyes of gamers

Marc Saltzman

Nintendo's Yoshi's Woolly World

Star Wars Battlefront


Bethesda Softworks' Fallout 4

'Tis the season to be jolly, and what better way to keep the kids — and kids at heart — happy than with a brand new video game.

If it's console and computer gamers you're shopping for, the following are some thumb-numbing suggestions. Prices are generally $49.99 to $74.99, depending on the platform. Be sure to check the ESRB age-rating in the corner of the box before buying.

Kids

Most games let you play content created by other people, but Nintendo's Super Mario Maker (for Nintendo Wii U) also lets you design, create and share your very own Super Mario adventures. Along with the 60-odd playable Nintendo-made levels, the game includes tools to make two-dimensional platforming levels based on previous Super Mario games.

As you might suspect, you'll mostly run from the left side of the screen to the right, leap across platforms, break open power-ups, climb into pipes, and jump on enemies to destroy them. After you've designed a world, play it through, hand the controller to a sibling or friend, or upload to the online community. You can download other creations, too.

One of the world's hottest kids' franchises is getting a reboot. Activision's Skylanders SuperChargers (for multiple platforms) once again fuses action figures with a video game — the toys come alive on the television screen when placed on the Portal of Power, which is connected to the console — but now there's collectible vehicles added to the mix. Players can tackle missions by land, sea and air, in a number of customizable and upgradeable vehicles, including cars, motorcycles, boats, tanks, helicopters and submarines. The game also introduces 20 new Skylanders characters, but parents will be relieved to learn the game also supports all existing Skylanders characters.

Other kids' games that won't disappoint: Nintendo's Yoshi's Woolly World, Disney's Disney Infinity 3.0, WB Games' LEGO: Dimensions, and Sony's Tearaway Unfolded.

Teens

Launching just ahead of the film Star Wars: Episode VII — The Force Awakens, Star Wars Battlefront from DICE and Electronic Arts (PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Windows PC) drops players into intense intergalactic battles based in iconic Star Wars locations — such as the snowy planet of Hoth – pitting Rebel forces against the Empire.

Along with playing as characters based on the original movie trilogy, you'll pilot beloved vehicles, as well, ranging from AT-ATs and TIE fighters to speeder bikes and even the Millennium Falcon. The game includes many online multiplayer modes and mission types for dozens of simultaneous players.

Guitar Hero is back after a five-year hiatus and it's nothing short of ambitious. Along with single-player and local multiplayer options, Activision's Guitar Hero Live (for multiple platforms) introduces a mode called GHTV, an always-on 24-hour music video network that lets you log on, strap in and strum to a continually updated collection of music videos and concert footage. That is — instead of the cartoon-like animated bands from previous games — you can rock out to your favorite artists and discover new music, while challenging others for high score.

Other recommended games for teens: Sony's Uncharted: The Nathan Drake Collection, EA Sports' NHL 16, and Activision's Destiny: The Taken King.

Adults

One of the most buzzed about games of the year, Bethesda Softworks' Fallout 4 (Xbox One, PlayStation 4, Windows PC), is the long-awaited return to the beloved single-player, open-world, role-playing game series. The follow-up to 2008's Fallout 3 lets you choose to play as a male or female and select a specific set of skills, and then venture out of a vault 200 years after an apocalyptic event. Played from a first- or third-person perspective, you can freely roam around huge environments, interface with memorable characters and gain access to more than 50 base weapons and more than 700 modifications. Plus, gamers can take advantage of a deep crafting system to create unique adventures.

The next installment of the legendary sci-fi shooter franchise, Halo 5: Guardians, is the built to showcase the power of Xbox One. Complementing its intense storyline — which can be run with three friends in a cooperative (co-op) mode — this new game focuses heavily on competitive multiplayer. One mode called Warzone challenges up to 24 players to battle on the biggest maps in Halo to date, while taking on multiple objectives including big boss battles, with land and air craft to aid in the fight.

Other worthy games for adults: Ubisoft's Assassin's Creed: Syndicate, CD Projekt Red's The Witcher 3: Witch Hunt, Activision's Call of Duty: Black Ops III, Microsoft Studios/Crystal Dynamics' Rise of the Tomb Raider, and Konami's Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain.

Consoles that make the gift list

Mike Yawney

It doesn't matter how young or old you are; video games continue to be a dominant pastime. While no new gaming consoles launched this year, some unique limited edition bundles did surface. Here are the top picks for those looking to surprise a gamer on their gift list.

Star Wars Battlefront PlayStation 4 Console - $469.99

The ultimate PlayStation bundle for any Star Wars fan, this unique console bears the image of Darth Vader's mask, while the DualShock wireless controller is designed after his chest panel.

Not only does this come with the highly anticipated Star Wars Battlefront game, it also includes four additional classic Star Wars games to keep even the best gamers busy over the holidays.

Xbox One Limited Edition Halo 5: Guardians Console - $549

There is no denying the Halo franchise is a force to be reckoned with, so it comes as no surprise Microsoft is releasing this limited edition Xbox One console for the holidays.

The design of the console itself is inspired by Spartan technology and has a massive 1 TB hard drive to store your games and media.

The wireless controller also sees a redesign with a new 3.5-mm headset jack. Other bonus items include a Spartan-themed SteelBook case with Halo 5: Guardians Limited Edition full game download, a Guardian model and exclusive downloadable content.

New Nintendo 3DS XL - $229.99

Nintendo's latest handheld console features not only a larger screen for more immersive gameplay, but new technology. Super stable 3D allows for a better experience and wider range of viewing angles. The handheld device also features built-in NFC functionality for communication with Nintendo's new Amiibo figures.

HP Pavilion Gaming Notebook - $899 and up

This surprisingly affordable, stylish laptop was designed with the gamer in mind. Armed with a quad-core processor and powerful graphics card, the latest laptop from HP can play the latest PC titles with ease. Since sound can play a huge role in games, HP teamed up with Bang & Olufsen to create an immersive audio experience.

Even the webcam has been enhanced with Intel Real-Sense to allow for facial recognition, 3D scanning and motion controls. Xbox owners will also be able to connect to the Xbox community and games thanks to Windows 10.

RetroN 5 - $169.99

A single-game console with enhanced resolution and improved sound, RetroN 5 can host games from 10 different systems supporting NES, Famicom, SNES, Super Famicom, Genesis, Mega Drive, Game Boy, Game Boy Colour and Game Boy Advance.

And the best part? You can save games on the fly, so even those most brutally challenging become manageable. Gamers must have the original cartridges in or to play games.

iPod Touch - $249 and up

With access to thousands of games, Apple's iPod Touch has quickly become a favourite for those who love to play on the go.

The latest iPod Touch has a significantly improved processor, which can play the latest downloadable games from the App Store. Gaming is only part of the package; with a terrific camera and access to apps, you can use the iPod Touch to do just about anything.

1 Xbox One Limited Edition Halo 5: Guardians Console, $549
2 New Nintendo 3DS XL, $229.99
3 Star Wars Battlefront PlayStation 4 Console, $469.99
4 RetroN 5 - $169.99
5 iPod Touch - $249 and up
6 HP Pavilion Gaming Notebook - $899 and up

Gift giving the Canadian way, eh?

Todd Lewys

Whether it's a family member, friend or work associate, we all know someone who's wild about all things Canadian.

Here's a quick snapshot of some gifts sure to please the person in your life who's a connoisseur of Canadiana.

HBC Olympic 2016 Collection Mittens ($12) and Toque ($25)
While wrapping yourself in the Canadian flag is heartwarming, it can't keep you warm on cold winter days.

A pair of Olympic Collection 2016 mittens and an Olympic Collection Canada marled toque, however, can. Combine them in a gift box, or use them as stocking stuffers. Available at Hudson Bay Company, thebay.com.

Roots Women's Maple Gloves ($48)
On frigid days, it's imperative to keep your digits in working order, so why not bless the woman in your life with a gift that looks great and will keep her hands from becoming ice blocks on frigid days: a pair of functional — and fashionable — women's maple gloves. Available at Roots, roots.com.

Roots Men's Lumberjack Boot Sock ($16.50/pair)
Patriots will love this gift — a pair of thick, cozy socks emblazoned with a maple leaf that come in red, white or blue trim with another Canadian classic — a snow-capped mountain scene. Available at Roots, roots.com.

Great Canadian Gift Company's Canadian Bacon Scented Soap ($6.99)
There's nothing much more Canadian than the smell of bacon, so why not bring it from the kitchen into the bathroom. It may not be the scent you think of when taking a shower, but it sure does reek Canada ... and yes, it really does smell like bacon! Available at thegreatcanadiangiftcompany.com.

Zazzle.ca's Grunge Canadian Flag Red Maple Leaf Courier Bag ($139)
This is the perfect gift for those who bleed red and white and love to lug an extra sweater and other paraphernalia around: a cool courier bag with shoulder strap, copious carrying capacity — and, most importantly, a red maple leaf and CANADA stenciled boldly on its front flap. Available at zazzle.ca.

Gap Women's Cable Knit Turtleneck ($59.95)
Cold Canadian winter days call for extreme measures to stay warm. This cable knit turtleneck is not only festive, but provides a layer of warmth that envelopes the torso and neck. Available at Gap, gapcanada.ca.

Gap Men's Onesie ($69.95)
Shoveling the driveway or digging out the car after a howling blizzard is a daunting task for even the hardiest Canadian male. This warm thermal onesie will provide him with the protection required to keep muscles warm and limber as they churn their way through the snow. Available at Gap, gapcanada.ca.

Banana Republic Men's Plaid Shirt ($85)
This shirt is a great choice on during the holiday season. Not only is it festive, but it evokes the classic Canadian lumberjack look — and, it helps keep you warm on sub-zero days. Available at Banana Republic, bananarepublic.ca.

Great Canadian Gift Company's Canadian Flag Placemat ($13.99)
There's no better way to show pride in your country than placing a Lady Rosedale Canadian flag placemat across your home's threshold. Available at thegreatcanadiangiftcompany.com.

Zazzle.ca's Red Autumn Canadian Maple Leaf Throw Pillow ($39.65)
This throw pillow is an accent piece that will add just the right touch of patriotic flavour — and colour — to a living room, den, rec room or cottage. Available at zazzle.ca.

1. Great Canadian Gift Company's Canadian Flag Placemat ($13.99)
2. Banana Republic Men's Plaid Shirt ($85)
3. Zazzle.ca's Red Autumn Canadian Maple Leaf Throw Pillow ($39.65)
4. Great Canadian Gift Company's Canadian Bacon Scented Soap ($6.99)
5. Roots Men's Lumberjack Boot Sock ($16.50/pair)
6. Zazzle.ca's Grunge Canadian Flag Red Maple Leaf Courier Bag ($139)
7. HBC Olympic 2016 Collection Mittens ($12)

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Give the gift of giving to others

Ylva Van Buuren

Could there be anything more satisfying than finding the perfect gift for those you love? Absolutely! Knowing that the gifts are doing good for others, too. Here are some gift ideas that keep on giving.

Agriculture Pack

A World Vision Agriculture Pack provides seeds, animal feed, tools, training and emergency food to families in need. It costs $35, but partnerships with the Canadian government and various companies and agencies double the value to $70. Visit worldvision.ca/gifts.

Charity Gift Cards

When you wrap up a CanadaHelps gift card, the recipient gets to choose which charity to support. There are more than 86,000 registered charities with CanadaHelps ranging from local health and arts and culture to environmental and social services charities. Gift cards start at $5. Visit canadahelps.org.

Help Syrian Refugees

There are many ways to help a Syrian family coming to Canada. Check in your community to see if a family is being sponsored, make a donation or volunteer your time or services. There is also the Syria Emergency Relief Fund. Visit charityintelligence.ca/syrian-refugees.

TOMS Slippers

Women's White Gold Boucle Slippers are a perfect holiday gift. Plus, for every pair of TOMS shoes you buy, the company provides a new pair of shoes to children in need. To date, the company has given more than 45 million new pairs of shoes to children around the world. $55/pair. Visit toms.ca or select retailers across Canada.

Shop for Hope

From the exclusive Shop for Hope collection at Winners and HomeSense, the net proceeds from the sale of the Plush Owl go to the Canadian Women's Foundation. $14.99/each. Available at Winners, winners.ca and HomeSense, homesense.ca.

Gift with a Gift

Choose a gift at Indigo such as the Fair Isle Socks with Faux-Sherpa Lining, and keep the gift going by donating to the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation at the cashier. The charity puts books into the hands of high-needs elementary school children. $34.50/pair. Visit chapters.indigo.ca.

Help Free the Children

All artisans gifts purchased from Me to We help Free the Children communities overseas. A Ghanaian Brass Halo Necklace, for example, gives a woman access to a prenatal workshop. A Rafiki, made with colourful glass beads threaded onto a stretchy 48-inch cord and worn as a bracelet, necklace, etc., helps educate a child for one year. Necklace, $32, Rafiki, $10. Visit shop.metowe.com.

Angels for Angels

Goods sold by Ten Thousand Villages are made by artisans in marginalized communities around the world, and every purchase helps those communities. At the same time, $2 from every purchase of the handcrafted Capiz Angel ornament from the Philippines will help fund Breakfast for Learning, the first national charity focused on nourishing Canadian children. Ornament, $20. Visit tenthousandvillages.ca or select retailers across Canada.

Help At-Risk Youth

Until Dec. 31, $5 from the sale of every Samsung Galaxy Grand Prime purchased from Virgin Mobile will go towards the company's RE*Generation program that helps connect at-risk and homeless youth with training, skills and opportunities for employment.

The slim-line phone with 1.2 GHz Quad Core processor, long-lasting battery and 5 MP camera is $249 (price varies depending on the plan). Purchase it at Virgin Mobile retail and virginmobile.ca. Virgin Mobile members can also participate by adding 'Change for a Dollar' to their monthly phone bill to donate $1/month to the cause. Members and Canadians can also text the word REGEN to 30333 to donate $5 to the RE*Generation program.

LA-RS Bracelets

Modeled after the Cartier love bracelets, these ONEXONE bracelets benefit the onexone.org charity and help feed children a healthy meal. Each set comes with four colours to represent various human races.

Join celebrities Chandler Parsons, Rita Ora, Diplo, Marcus Stroman, Hailey Baldwin and others... and try them on for size. $30. Visit la-rs.org.

Help WWF

Adopt a Spirit Bear for $40 and help the World Wide Fund for Nature protect the species. You'll receive a kit containing a plush bear, adoption certificate, poster and reusable WWF tote bag.

There are more than 30 different species to choose from. Visit shop.wwf.ca.

1 World Vision Agriculture Pack, $35
2 Ten Thousand Villages Capiz Angel ornament, $20
3 TOMS White Gold Boucle Slippers, $55
4 Indigo Fair Isle Socks, $34.50
5 Me to We Rafiki, $10
6 World Wide Fund for Nature Spirit Bear, $40

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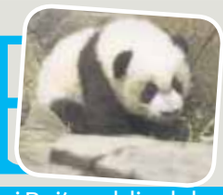

Smithsonian National Zoo readies for baby panda Bei Bei's public debut

A cultural getaway to Montreal

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts is putting the spotlight on the Beaver Hall Group, a female artist ensemble based in the city in the 1920s. KATHY BUCKWORTH/FOR METRO

IN 48 HOURS

Art, history and French-inspired flavours await in dynamic city

Kathy Buckworth
For Metro Canada

Montreal has an international reputation for fabulous cuisine, fantastic shopping and fine arts. You only need spend 48 hours to get a taste of this trendy and growing city, which has rightfully earned a UNESCO City of Design designation.

Day 1

In the heart of the city you'll find the Golden Square Mile, running from Avenue Atwater to rue Saint-Denis, world-famous for its concentration of art boutiques. Start your day with the city's best-known "power breakfast" hot spot, Le Renoir at the Sofitel Hotel. Walk a few scenic blocks down the street to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. The wonderfully curated "Colours of Jazz" exhibition runs until Jan. 31, featuring the unique brushstrokes of the predominantly female artist ensemble the Beaver Hall Group, who painted in a Modernist style in the 1920s.

Lunch at the café at the museum is both French and modern fusion inspired; blood pudding, Moroccan octopus and seasonal fare are just some of the elegantly plated feature dishes. Save room for the exotic assortment of desserts.

Le Renoir restaurant at the Sofitel Hotel. SOFITEL PR

Put your power shoes on to head out for an afternoon of shopping at some of the country's most exclusive shops, including Tiffany's, Gucci, Escada, and Montreal's own favourite department store, Simons.

Unload your shopping and head into Le Bar, a hopping bistro that attracts both young millennials and senior executives, featuring a line of apple-based Neige cider drinks and an eclectic bar menu, showcasing their famous charcuterie board and tasty local Quebec cheeses.

Day 2

Stop for a croissant at one of the many aromatic bistros and bakeries on rue Sainte-Catherine, before heading for your next museum hit at the McCord Museum, which specializes in the preservation of Canadian history, as well as offering fun and educational children's programming. Want to feel like a lady who lunches? Be one by dropping into the Holt Renfrew lunchroom, and linger over a drink before planning your next shopping move.

Relax in your room at the Sofitel and order an in-room spa treatment, or if you're looking for a true rural Quebec experience in the midst of your urban visit, head to La Face Cachée de la Pomme, an hour outside of Montreal, and the birthplace of ice cider. Extreme cold temperatures allow for the creation of this unique drink experience, and exemplifies what they call "Quebec culture in a bottle." Tours are available and their foie gras, made with ice cider, is a particular treat, perfect for the end of an artisanal- and action-packed two days.

Kathy Buckworth was a guest of the Sofitel Hotel, Montreal.

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tico.ca Cuba

Muskoka a lively winter wonderland

DEERHURST

Expansion of resort means more to see and do year round

Duncan McAllister
For Metro Canada

A sleigh ride is just one of the many activities you can do at Deerhurst. COURTESY DEERHURST RESORT

Snow and ice means one thing in Muskoka — great Canadian fun.

Muskoka's venerable Deerhurst Resort in Huntsville, Ont., is well known for its many summer activities, including two championship 18-hole golf courses. Deerhurst also played host to the world's leaders for the G8 Summit in 2010.

What you may not know, is that the famed 118-year-old tourist getaway operates year-round, and during the holiday season, the sprawling 100-acre property is transformed into a magical winter wonderland.

Skyline International CEO Michael Sneyd told Metro in October that there's lots to do at Deerhurst during the fall and winter seasons. "We've been full the last three or four weeks with people enjoying the fall colours, coming up and getting close to nature."

Deerhurst has a unique position within Huntsville, and is only a few minutes from Algonquin Park, situated right on Peninsula Lake and adjacent to the Lake of Bays. If you're travelling with kids, then nothing compares to the newly renovated Muskoka resort condominiums, featuring a full kitchen, cosy gas fireplace and views of the golf course.

The main dining room at the Eclipse restaurant sits under a vaulted ceiling in the Pavilion, with a panoramic view overlooking Peninsula Lake. Deerhurst's chefs serve up the most appetizing breakfast buffets, lunches and dinners, specializing in local fare. You may find on the menu such northern Ontario delicacies as Manitoulin Island freshwater rainbow trout or Muskoka craft and wildflower honey-glazed half chicken served with local farm-fresh vegetables.

Sneyd says that over the coming years, Skyline will be investing $10 million "to improve the ambience and the guest experience here at Deerhurst, and provide more activities and events than there are right now." Plans are underway for a 165-unit waterfront condo development at the site of the old Lakeside Lodge.

Skyline chairman and founder Gil Blutrich acquired the Muskoka resort in 2011, with big plans to develop the property into a world-class destination. "My vision is larger. I see Deerhurst basically as Banff," says Blutrich.

"We're going to add, year by year, more amenities to make this resort well known internationally, with new, innovative ideas. One of them is something like the Scandinave Spa, with hot springs year-round to overcome the slow seasons."

The writer was a guest of Deerhurst Resort, which did not review nor approve the story.

IN SEASON

Have you ever driven a dog sled? "A lot of the things that we offer have their winter side," says Deerhurst marketing manager Laura Kennedy. "We even have winter horseback riding and sleigh rides." You can join a snowshoe trek, or hit the cross-country ski trails or the 1.5-km skating trail at Arrowhead Park.

Deerhurst's Christmas in Muskoka package includes a Christmas Eve reception followed by a bountiful buffet dinner. "There's also a Christmas brunch and that's usually the start of all the snow activities," says Kennedy. There's also indoor fun for the kids. "We take Legacy Hall and turn it into a giant indoor play zone."

One noteworthy seasonal event is the Canadian National Pond Hockey Championships. "Imagine 24 ice rinks on the bay, all in action at once," says Kennedy.

TRAVEL NOTES GALAXY QUEST, SANTA'S ROOTS

Adventure sharing
Startup tour company Embark is a booking site with a difference: It's an adventure-sharing platform that lets you create, share and book adventures around the world with other like-minded adventurous people. The growing network of local guides is ready to take you skiing, hiking, ice climbing, camping, kayaking or fly fishing, person to person. Visit Embark.org.

The world is your oyster. STOCKSNAP

Space on Earth
You can actually visit the barren lands seen in Star Wars: Episode VII. Filmmakers chose the sand dunes of Abu Dhabi to shoot the desert scenes, in particular the Empty Quarter desert, which has the world's largest uninterrupted sand mass. Insight Vacations offers a four-day stopover in Dubai that includes a four-wheel drive trek into Abu Dhabi and its nearby sandy film set. Visit InsightVacations.com.

Episode VII stars the dunes of Abu Dhabi. CONTRIBUTED

Santa's hometown
While the folklore spans multiple cultures, the Turkish seaside town of Demre lays claim to being the birthplace of St. Nicholas in 270 AD. Unsurprisingly, he was known for his charity and secret gift-giving to the poor. Visitors to Demre can see frescoes depicting the saint's life and work in the Church of St. Nicholas, a solid example of Byzantine architecture. Visit GoTurkey.com. DOUG WALLACE

The Church of St. Nicholas in Demre, Turkey. CONTRIBUTED

Flights are from Toronto via Air Transat. Prices shown are per person, based on double occupancy in lead room category, unless otherwise stated. Valid on new bookings only. Space and prices are subject to availability at time of booking. Prices advertised are valid from December 18 to 21, 2015 only. Taxes and fees are extra and noted above. Travel Agency fees may apply. For full descriptions and terms and conditions, refer to transat.com. Transat is a division of Transat Tours Canada Inc., and is registered as a travel wholesaler in Ontario (Reg #50009486) with offices at 191 The West Mall, Suite 800, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K8. The Marlin Travel Gift Card is issued by the Home Trust Company. The card is subject to terms and conditions stated in the Card Holder Agreement. Marlin Travel is a division of Transat Distribution Canada Inc. BC Reg. #23567 ON Reg: 50015084. Head Office: 191The West Mall, Suite 700, Etobicoke, ON, M9C 5K8.

Local cuisine makes travel memorable

ON THE MOVE

From London to Peru, best cities for meals that excite

Loren Christie
For Metro Canada

The Farmshop bakery in L.A., and, at right, a dish at Nopi in London. SPENCER LOWELL; INSET: CONTRIBUTED

According to Christine Couvelier, a culinary consultant who watches global food trends, the best travel memoirs always include food memories.

I recently asked her about Travelocity.ca's list of the hottest destinations in culinary tourism and why these cities made the cut.

Montreal, Canada

This fabulous food city focuses on tradition and pride. Head to Schwartz's, offering the best smoked meat since 1928.

Visit the Atwater market where there is a store with more than 800 varieties of cheese. The Montreal bagels are hand-rolled, dipped in honey water and baked in a wood-fired oven. You can wander around in there for a whole afternoon.

Los Angeles, U.S.A.

One of the things happening in L.A. is the rising popularity of communal dining. A table or two offering a communal dining experience is becoming part of many destination restaurants.

Farmshop Santa Monica is a great spot to make some new foodie friends. Picture sharing a meal at a big wooden table in the middle of the restaurant surrounded by shelves stacked with gourmet food products.

Chicago, U.S.A.

With such a wide range of ethnicities represented in this city, dining in Chicago is a marathon, not a sprint. The food community in this city is focusing on the combinations of sweet and heat. Head to Topolobampo with Chef Rick Bayless, the leading Mexican chef in all of North America. Have the achiote-marinated suckling pig, it's wrapped in banana leaves. I love the poached papaya on the side.

London, England

One of the biggest trends is vegetables as the star of the plate and there is no better place than London, England, to really taste this trend.

Be inspired by Chef Yotam Ottolenghi (Ottolenghi, Nopi), known for his vegetarian Mediterranean cuisine.

Head to one of the great produce markets. I love markets. You see what the locals are purchasing and how their day-to-day lives rotate around the market area.

Lima, Peru

A culinary tour is fabulous but a chocolate tour is even better, and there is a great focus on the origin of chocolate in Lima. A chocolate museum and numerous chocolate boutiques allow you to experience the nuances in the different flavours of chocolate.

On a side note, one restaurant not to miss is Central. It is considered one of the best restaurants in the world with a menu that focuses on tastes in four parts; mountain, sea, desert and jungle.

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3 WAYS TO RING IN THE NEW YEAR AROUND THE WORLD

Not many days from now, the planet will bid farewell to 2015 and welcome 2016 with open arms. We're taking a world tour of the big cities where New Year's is a major cause for celebration. Let's take a look at what's planned in London, New York and Rio de Janeiro. **AFP**

BEN STANSALL/AFP

1 London, U.K.

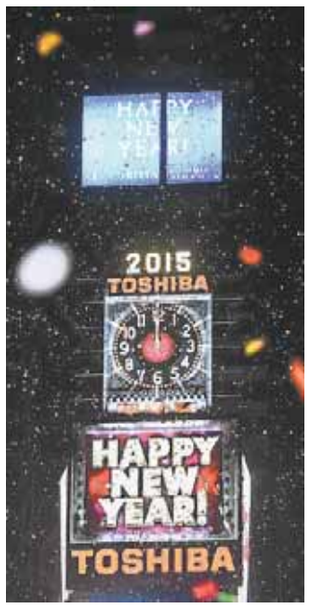
The U.K. capital celebrates New Year's on the banks of the River Thames, opposite the Palace of Westminster. Unfortunately, since 2014 visitors need a ticket to watch the spectacular fireworks show above Big Ben, a decision taken last year to ensure spectator safety. All the tickets have now been snapped up. The show begins at 5 p.m. and ends at 2 a.m.

The place to be: London Eye, The Queen's Walk

Watch it at home: Those unable to get a ticket will be able to watch the show on the BBC One TV channel, which broadcasts it live.

>> london.gov.uk

JEWEL SAMAD/AFP



2 New York, U.S.A.

The Big Apple is a must-do for those who want to celebrate 2016 in style. The entertainment is concentrated in Times Square where all the famous brightly lit billboards form part of the event. The lineup of performers this year include Carrie Underwood, Demi Lovato, Luke Bryan, and Wiz Khalifa with Charlie Puth.

The place to be: Times Square

Practical tips: It's better to arrive early to be sure to get a place and see the Times Square ball drop. It's advisable to take Sixth or Eighth Avenues to get to Times Square. The police close the adjacent roads.

>> timessquarenyc.org

GUSTAVO PELLIZZON/AG/AFP

3 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

New Year's in Rio is the second-biggest popular event in the city, after its mythical carnival. More than two million people attend. There's a firework display at midnight that lasts for around 20 minutes. This year the display and soundtrack will be themed around the Olympics, set to take place in August 2016 in the city.

The place to be: Copacabana Beach

Safety precautions: It's better to wear shoes rather than sandals. As the celebrations take place on the beach and champagne will be flowing, there could be fragments of glass in the sand.

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metro SPORTS

Cleveland Cavaliers guard Iman Shumpert calmly delivered his daughter when his fiancée unexpectedly went into labour in their bathroom

Leafs crash and Burns

NHL

Sharks D-man caps comeback with OT goal

Brent Burns banked the winning goal off Peter Holland's leg as the Toronto Maple Leafs blew a lead and lost to the San Jose Sharks 5-4 in overtime Thursday night.

Jonathan Bernier allowed three goals on 27 shots after replacing injured goaltender Garret Sparks and fell to 0-8-3 this season.

Burns scored his 11th goal of the season 2:13 into 3-on-3 overtime.

THURSDAY At ACC

5	4
SHARKS	LEAFS

Holland, Leo Komarov, James van Riemsdyk and Michael Grabner scored for the Leafs (10-13-6), who played their third overtime game in a row and 10th of the year.

Joe Pavelski, Patrick Marleau, Marc-Edouard Vlasic and Matt Nieto scored in regulation for San Jose (16-14-1), which got 28 saves from Martin Jones.

A tripping penalty on Pierre-Alexandre Parenteau opened the door for the Sharks to take an early lead. Six seconds into the power play, Brent Burns fed a wide-open Pavelski for his 15th goal of the season.

Pavelski moved ahead of Steven Stamkos for the second-most goals in the NHL since the 2012-13 lockout with his 109th, trailing only Alex Ovechkin, who has 150.

With Leafs defenceman Matt Hunwick in the penalty box for hooking, the Sharks needed a 30 seconds to score their second power-play goal of the night. Marleau fired a shot through Roman Polak's legs that beat Sparks clean.

Sparks bolted to the bench immediately after Marleau's goal on San Jose's 15th shot and went down the tunnel, leaving Bernier to handle the rest of the game.

Grabner gave Toronto a 4-2 lead in the third period with the Sharks struggling in their own zone. But Vlasic scored through traffic to get a goal back for San Jose.

Bernier stopped Chris Tierney on a penalty shot that brought the best out of the crowd. He gave up the tying goal to Nieto with 8:11 left in the third, but team defence in front of Bernier was more responsible than he was. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Sharks Joe Thornton, left, and Joe Pavelski celebrate an overtime goal scored by Brent Burns, not pictured, against Leafs goaltender Jonathan Bernier on Thursday night at Air Canada Centre. LUCAS OLENIUK/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

WOMEN'S SOCCER

Buchanan usurps Sinclair for award

Kadeisha Buchanan had yet to reach double digits in age when Christine Sinclair started her run of 11 straight Canadian female player of the year awards in 2004.

Sinclair, who also won the award in 2000, is still the captain and talisman of the Canadian women's soccer team. But the 32-year-old star forward's stranglehold on the top player award ended Thursday when Buchanan, a 20-year-old defender who put her stamp on the world stage in 2015, was voted BMO player of the year.

Kadeisha Buchanan GETTY IMAGES

"It's definitely quite a shock because obviously Christine has won it so many times," Buchanan, a Toronto native, told The Canadian Press.

"It's a bit of change to get used to. Like wow ... It's obviously a great honour," she added.

Sinclair and coach John Herdman no doubt led the cheering for Buchanan down in Brazil, where the Canadian women are competing at the International Tournament of Natal.

Sinclair, who shuns the spotlight, is the ultimate team player. And Herdman, who dubbed Buchanan "the Sinclair of defenders" back in May 2014, has been transitioning the Canadian squad to one where Sinclair helps float the entire boat rather than steer it.

Forward/fullback Josee Belanger was second in voting for the player of the year award, followed by Sinclair. THE CANADIAN PRESS

> **"Still only 20 years old, she will be a leader for Canada at the international level for years to come.**
>
> Victor Montagliani, president of the Canadian Soccer Association

Raptors point guard Kyle Lowry attempts a layup against Jeremy Lin of the Hornets Thursday night in Charlotte.
BROCK WILLIAMS-SMITH/NBAE VIA GETTY IMAGES

NBA

Raps feel sting of timeout call

Jeremy Lin scored a season-high 35 points, Kemba Walker had 27 and the Charlotte Hornets defeated the Toronto Raptors 109-99 in overtime on Thursday night.

P.J. Hairston added 14 points, including a three-pointer with 90 seconds remaining in overtime that put the Hornets ahead to stay.

DeMar DeRozan scored 31 points, Kyle Lowry added 20 and Terrence Ross had 17 for Toronto. Bismack Biyombo, who spent four seasons with Charlotte, had a career-best 18 rebounds while also blocking seven shots and scoring eight points.

THURSDAY In Charlotte

109	99
HORNETS	RAPTORS

The Raptors rallied back from a 16-point deficit late in the third quarter.

The Hornets led 72-56 on Lin's layup with 4:14 left in the third period. The Raptors came back, eventually tying it at 90 on DeRozan's jumper with 26 seconds remaining.

Following a Hornets turnover in the dying seconds of the game, DeRozan sank a shot from halfcourt, only to have it waved off as the Raptors were calling for a timeout.

Toronto took its only lead of the game on Lowry's layup 15 seconds into overtime. After two ties, Hairston hit his 3. The Hornets closed out the game by outscoring the Raptors 10-3 over the final 67 seconds, going 8 of 8 from the free throw line. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Series in Shapiro's sights

MLB OFF-SEASON

New front-office boss says Blue Jays are a title contender

Compared to the last few years, the Toronto Blue Jays have had a relatively quiet off-season.

There have been a few signings and some trade activity but the Blue Jays have so far steered clear of the free-agent frenzy and any blockbuster moves. Las Vegas still likes Toronto's chances in 2016, with most sports books pegging them among the favourites to win the American League.

New team president Mark Shapiro is also feeling bullish about the Blue Jays' chances.

"It feels like a team capable of winning the World Series next year," Shapiro said Thursday.

The Boston Red Sox have emerged as a slight favourite in the AL after the signing of former Blue Jays ace David Price, who inked a seven-year deal worth $217 million US. The Blue Jays are in the mix of AL contenders with the Houston Astros, Kansas City Royals and Texas Rangers.

Toronto is coming off a 93-69 season and its first playoff appearance in 22 years. They fell to the Royals in the ALCS in six games.

Toronto will bring back arguably the most feared offence in the major leagues in 2016, anchored by sluggers Jose Bautista, Edwin Encarnacion and AL MVP Josh Donaldson. On the pitching front, the Jays lost Price to free agency but re-signed Marco Estrada, signed free agent J.A. Happ and acquired Jesse Chavez in a trade with Oakland.

New GM Ross Atkins said the team has been engaged in discussions on several fronts.

"We are going to stay open-minded and if there is a way that we can creatively just add depth to our pitching or fortify our pitching staff, we'll do it," Atkins said.

Shapiro, Atkins and assistant GM Tony LaCava met with members of the Toronto chapter of the Baseball Writers' Association of America on Thursday.

Shapiro said the possibility of Rogers Centre moving from artificial turf to grass is being considered but there are no firm plans in place. THE CANADIAN PRESS

10-1

On website Bet365, Toronto and Boston are co-favourites among AL teams to win the Fall Classic at 10-1.

JAYS AWARDS

The Toronto BBWAA has revealed its team award winners for 2015.

Josh Donaldson was unanimous player of the year and Marco Estrada was named top pitcher. Outfielder Kevin Pillar was named most improved and closer Roberto Osuna took rookie of the year.

Top playoff performer Marco Estrada will provide stability to the starting rotation when the Jays return to action in the spring. CARLOS OSORIO/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

PREMIER LEAGUE

Chelsea turn page on Jose

Jose Mourinho's second tenure as Chelsea manager abruptly ended on Thursday with the team languishing just above the relegation zone only seven months after winning the Premier League.

Mourinho's dismissal came 2-1/2 years after his return to Stamford Bridge and only four months into a new four-year contract signed after winning his third league title with Chelsea. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

"His three league titles, FA Cup, Community Shield and three League Cup wins over two spells make him the most successful manager in our 110-year history.

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RECIPE Mexican Egg Bake

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

A zesty tomato sauce punctuated with avocado and cilantro is the perfect bed for runny, baked eggs.

Ready in
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 20 minutes
Serves 4

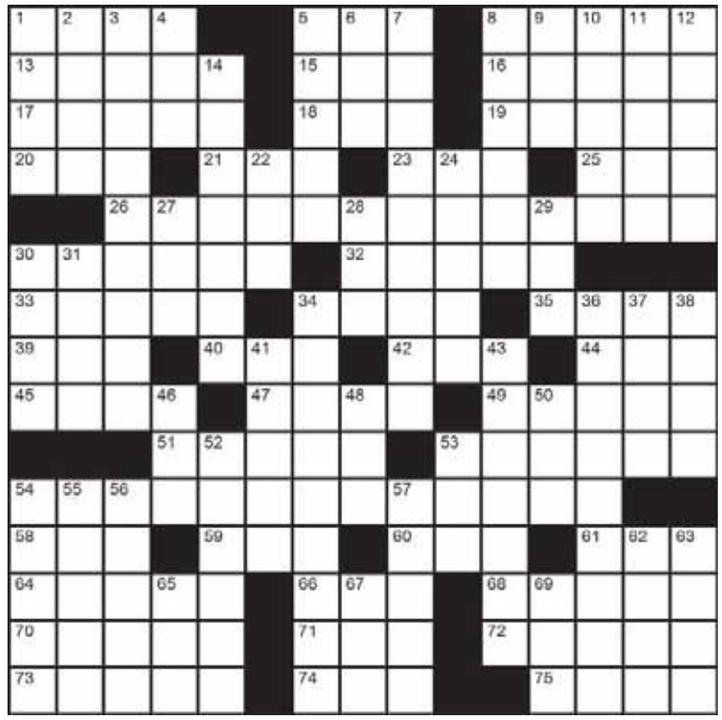
Ingredients
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp red pepper or cayenne
- 1 x 28 oz can tomatoes
- 1 x 14 oz can black beans, rinsed
- 5 eggs
- Small handful of cilantro, chopped
- 1/2 avocado, sliced
- 1/2 cup cheddar, grated
- 1/2 cup Greek yogurt

Directions
1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. In a medium-sized skillet, warm olive oil and sauté the onion and garlic until they begin to soften. Add spices and stir; cook 2 minutes. Add tomatoes and black beans. Use the back of a wooden spoon to break up tomatoes. Simmer for about 15 or 20 minutes until sauce has thickened.
3. Gently crack the eggs on top of the sauce. Place skillet in the oven for 8 to 10 minutes, or until egg whites are cooked but yolks are runny.
4. Remove pan from oven and allow to cool a bit before placing on a trivet on the table. Scoop each serving gently, being sure to get an egg and a good amount of the bean sauce. Place extras — avocado, yogurt, cheese and cilantro — on table so everyone can DIY toppings.

FOR MORE MEAL IDEAS, VISIT SWEETPOTATOCHRONICLES.COM

CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Math instrument [abbr.]
5. Illuminated
8. 5th Dimension member Marilyn
13. Tropical greeting
15. Iron __
16. Green spaces for homes
17. Particular parrot
18. Nourished
19. Fix that squeak once more
20. Pitcher's stat.
21. Boat's stern
23. Nero's 511
25. Key: French
26. Character in #14-Down: 2 wds.
30. Fashion designer Ms. Johnson
32. Tolerate
33. Bird-like
34. "Tres _!"
35. High-five-to-high-five hit
39. Sleep state, commonly
40. Cardinals player's baseball cap letters
42. Actor's representative [abbr.]
44. Diminutive suffix
45. Was aware
47. Remorseful person
49. Britannica, e.g.
51. Not __ (Not so far)
53. Crowd reactions to corny jokes
54. Villains-in-white-armour in #14-Down
58. Left tap's meaning
59. Haunted house hooowl!
60. Feminine suffix
61. Lobster __ Diavolo (Seafood dish with pasta)
64. Book's beginning, briefly
66. "__ Have to Say the Words?" by Bryan Adams
68. Science fiction being
70. Clay pigeon shooting
71. 'Ether' suffix
72. It's often served with tongs
73. Abrasive
74. Sanctions, short-style
75. Gladiator's 951

DOWN
1. Arrived (b.1849 - d.1919)
2. Banned orchard spray
3. When a TV show airs regionally: 2 wds.
4. Repeated-word dance
5. Former factory living spaces
6. Wrath
7. Classic toy from Santa: 2 wds.
8. Immeasurable
9. Flight simulators co. headquartered in Saint-Laurent, QC
10. __-Pot (Slow cooker)
11. Wearer of the black tutu in Swan Lake
12. Canadian doctor, the 'Father of Modern Medicine', William __
14. "Star Wars: The Force __" (2015)
22. Tina of "Sisters" (2015)
24. Type of fighter craft in #14-Down, -_-
27. ___ Today (American newspaper)
28. Trombonist Mr. Winding
29. __ Miserables
30. Tree trunk topping
31. All square
34. Canadian band that formed in 1984: 2 wds.
36. Production company behind #14-Down
37. Kirk __, "Superman" (1948) star
38. Bench press muscles, commonly
41. __ __ understand (Attempt at comprehending)
43. Nobel-winning Mother, and namesakes
46. Combat reason
48. Ike's WWII arena
50. Scand. land
52. Not lumpy or bumpy
53. Car's navigation aid, commonly
54. __ kebab
55. Toy truck brand
56. Furry mammal that can swim
57. Trompe l'__ (Visual illusions)
62. Authentic
63. "The King __ _" (1956)
65. Home addr.
67. Tree of acorns
69. Lake: French

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS by Sally Brompton

Aries March 21 - April 20
If you haven't done anything marvellous yet don't worry because there is still time — just. Make your move this weekend, certainly before the Sun changes signs on the 22nd.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
Changes are coming, changes that will enable you to move in a new, exciting direction when the Sun moves in your favour early next week. Do only what your heart tells you to.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
Geminis are supposed to be daring. Geminis are supposed to take risks. So what happened? Life is meant to be a great adventure. Make today the day when you rediscover your true nature again.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
When the Sun moves into your opposite sign of Capricorn in a few days you'll be at the halfway point of your solar year. It's a good time to take stock of how far you've come.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
This is no time to slow down. There is a lot to be done before the Sun leaves the most dynamic area of your chart on the 2nd. Creatively, and romantically, there is no limit to what you can accomplish.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Don't waste time and energy on senseless disputes with people you don't respect. Focus on more important matters between now and when the Sun changes signs next Tuesday.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Your present course is taking you in the wrong direction and you're missing opportunities simply because you're too stubborn to admit it. There's still time to get back on track.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Stand up for your rights and don't let anyone tell you what you can and cannot do. What others don't seem to understand is that you cannot be bribed or pressured to go against your principles. Flattery, of course, is harder to defend against.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
The Sun remains in your sign a few more days, so make the most of it. Take every opportunity that comes your way and today can be special.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Recent weeks have been far from easy and there will be more challenges to come over the next few days. However, come Tuesday, when the Sun moves into your sign, things will start to get better in a big way.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Steer clear of other people's fights and feuds — there is nothing you can gain from them. If you stick your nose in where it is not wanted you're inviting someone to take a poke at it!

Pisces Feb. 20 - March 20
Once again you're allowing yourself to be dragged into situations that are not good for you. Make an effort to put distance between you and those who would use you.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

3						1		2
		5	9				3	
	7		6					9
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			1			6	4	
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	8				6	2		
6		1						7

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4	7	5	9	1	8	6	2	3
1	2	9	3	6	5	7	4	8
8	3	6	7	4	2	1	9	5
6	4	7	2	8	9	5	3	1
3	9	8	6	5	1	2	7	4
5	1	2	4	7	3	8	6	9
9	8	3	5	2	7	4	1	6
7	5	4	1	3	6	9	8	2
2	6	1	8	9	4	3	5	7

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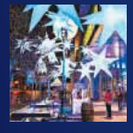

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Proud of this success, Niagara sets aside the month of January to celebrate all things Icewine. From glitzy galas and decadent winery dinners to icy street festivals filled with all kinds of frosty fun, this month-long celebration of Canada's liquid gold is not to be missed.